

**BLACKLISTED: THE YOUNG BLACK MALE PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALLER AND  
EDUCATION IN ENGLAD**

**by**

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## **Abstract**

Although much sociological attention has been given to black athlete's experiences of oppression and subjugation in sport, little in depth investigation has centred on the restricting of educational opportunities encountered by young male athletes as they begin their careers. This is particularly important given that so few athletes make into professional sport. Accordingly, this research study was conducted to help gain a further understanding of the socio-cultural influences and standard of education received by young black male footballers within England. Sport is a site where the black man heavily identifies and sees opportunities to develop alternative forms of social and economic capital. However, consequently many young black male athletes become pigeon-holed into believing their only viable future career path is in sport or in this study football. It is interesting to see how young black males are pigeon-holed into sport by the educational system once identified as having a talent within the sport. Taking an ethnographic approach, I analysed the experiences of 7 BME (Black Minority Ethnic) ex-youth players from professional football academies. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken investigating their playing and educational experiences and were analysed thematically. Findings revealed that the participants in question all incurred issues regarding to identity construction, career pathway restriction, racial humour, career transition and mental wellbeing.

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# Introduction, Aims and Objectives

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## ***Beginnings***

Attending school in South London, Physical Education (PE) was always my favourite subject. I knew from a young age that I was physically capable and felt like it was the only academic subject in which teachers highlighted my strengths. In PE I was readily elected by teachers to stand in front of the class and demonstrate the skills we would be practicing in the session. Such acknowledgement and responsibility built my confidence and gave me a sense of achievement and belonging, I felt I identified with PE. In the other more 'academic' subjects however I felt less confident and insecure. Unlike PE in which my abilities were assumed to come 'naturally' to me, I became anxious that my academic weaknesses would be exposed in these other classes. I worked hard to better myself in Maths & English at times but received little reward and encouragement for my efforts. This is not to say that I did not have an interest in other subjects, it's just that I was unaware of the great black doctors, politicians or scientists of our time. However, I remember my textbooks detailing the 'rags to riches' narratives of iconic black athletes such as Ian Wright, Michael Jordan, and Michael Johnson. I quickly learned that the "black male heroes" in society are typically athletes. Therefore, I figured (and others presumed) that I was best suited for a career in sport as I identified with those who I saw in these books.

I was lacking a repertoire of cultural narratives upon which to draw on other than those in sport. I felt that developing my physical capital was the only way to achieve the success and respect I wanted. Concentrating all my efforts at solidifying myself as the best athlete at my school, I developed a strong sense of 'athletic identity' and found myself becoming increasingly focused and conscious of achieving my athletic goals. Football was my favourite sport, and as I kept excelling, my early aspirations of becoming a professional footballer became my life plan. Scouts from Premier League teams were regularly watching games I took part in. My Under-16's coaches were speaking to clubs that wanted me on trial with a chance at earning a Youth Training Scholarship (YTS). A YTS was a full-time apprenticeship role in which players go from full-time education to full-time training. This was deemed as the holy grail as in youth football, as I would

be able to dedicate all my time to training and improving as a player. One step closer to completing my only ambition of being awarded a professional contract.

### ***Football is everything***

My confidence evolved into arrogance mixed with ignorance as I entered my final years of school. I figured I would receive my YTS at the end of the school year so with every passing day I became focused solely on football. I bragged to friends, peers, classmates or whoever would listen to me that I was going to be the next one to 'make it'. That belief in myself led me to use it as an excuse for my lack of engagement in my academic classes. When my teachers commented on my lack of effort in class, in no uncertain terms I let them know where my destiny lied and that was in football, not books! Outside of school, coaches at my club side fed my ego as they waxed lyrical about my performances, I was confident that I would soon transcend into the big time. My self-assuredness was valorised, and I developed a swagger and bravado to accompany the 'glorified sense of self' that I was developing. In the months leading up to May when YTS contracts are awarded, my performances on the pitch excelled, but my grades in class declined. Despite the warnings from my teachers, I felt their opinion on my future was irrelevant. If I played well my woeful grades wouldn't matter. The last few months at school signalled a real downturn in my application to any academic subjects. My grades and behaviour had slipped so far that my PE teacher had banned me from playing for the school team until improvements in my academic performance were met. I still didn't care. Why does it matter? I was going to make it anyway! I carried on doing the bare minimum and even worse became very vocal about it. This was further enhanced by my importance as a physical asset to the school. Belief in my sporting ability to compensate for my poor academic application was vindicated when I was re-selected for the school team for a crucial semi-final despite my worsening attitude. Testament again that if I performed on the pitch, life will take care of itself off it. However, May came and I had still not been offered a YTS by the club. Now I began to grow anxious.

There was the obligatory parent/coach induction evening with the YTS education tutors at the club, so I attended with my Mum. Coaches and teachers would discuss the YTS program with parents and the expectations of each player on the pitch and off it. "Poor behaviour will not be

accepted. This year we have also decided that grades will be a determining factor for boys that have not yet received their YTS!" I swallowed a huge gulp past a lump in my throat, but I had heard all these types of empty threats before, it is just a way for coaches and teachers to protect themselves, they have to say that to look responsible! My Mum had a very brief, curt conversation with the head coach which I observed from a distance, this was my first sign of a downturn in events. The chat a bit too short for my liking! The sense of trouble afoot was coupled when my mum fed back her opinion on the brief encounter. "That man never looked me in my eye once!" My mum being Afro-Caribbean meant any little social cue she deemed as negative fuelled her worrying intuition. Would the unthinkable happen? Would I not be getting an offer? Me? No chance I have always made it happen in this game. No way would I have to go back and tell everyone I did not get my YTS. The immovable lump that I had in my throat on the drive home became harder to swallow with every memory of my nonchalant attitude in a class setting. The "I told you so's" would be unbearable. Of course, my mothers' intuition and my discomfort about the situation proved to be true. A few days later a letter to the house came and told me that I would not be handed a scholarship but was given leaflets to exit trials. That was that then. I felt deflated and disillusioned. Never has my sporting ability been in question, I was the best at everything. I felt sick. A few days later, my pride pushed me to ask my coach for feedback on the reasons as to why I was not offered a YTS. "Your attitude at school lad". Was the retort. "We need to be liaising with players Heads' of years now. A lot of you lads are great on the pitch but come into the educational with a chip on your shoulder. It is known that your behaviour deteriorates when you lot are bored. We were told that you have been disruptive, we need boys that are ready to act accordingly." I felt let down. The same coaches that had celebrated my confidence and 'swag' (racialised caricature) and told me to focus on football were now saying I was not of the right character for them. That was the last communication I had with that coach. Two years I played for them, trained three times a week and day-dreamed of turning out for them every time at least eight hours a day. From all of that to nothing! I attended the 'exit trials' they had posted to me with my rejection letter. Exit trials are large events where all players that were released at age sixteen would go to in the hope of gaining a YTS at an alternative club. Playing for a lower level team was just pure failure to me. But I could not be seen to do something else, I needed to at least be in football as I was the "Footballer"!



Eventually I signed with a development academy at a League 2 club. However, long before it was evident, my passion and attitude had been ruined by rejection. I was not mature enough to handle such a life defining moment at the time. I did not have the want or the drive to play anymore yet I felt unjustly done by not receiving the YTS. I felt they left me on the scrapheap. I did not know what to do and I did not have anyone to talk to about not wanting to play anymore. Everyone knew me as a footballer, and I thought it was all I could do. I said to myself I must keep going until I made it. I was nothing without football. Who will care about me if I am not performing on a pitch? Football is life!

### ***We don't need no education***

When I first arrived at my new academy, I was full of false hope, but still passionate about the sport as it is all I knew. Over time however I felt my shoulders slump and my head drop. I wasn't running as fast, jumping as high or tackling as hard. It's not that I couldn't; it's just that I felt the importance of my performance and the being under constant surveillance weighing on me. I was not good enough to make it clearly, but what do I do? These feelings were compounded further as in the eyes of the coaches it was my physical attributes that were continually being emphasised as opposed to my technical or tactical astuteness. "Use your pace Nyall!" they would constantly say. When asking for coaches' advice on how to improve I was told "You need to be making the most of the attributes you have been given. Look at the size of you and you are not putting yourself about enough. You need to get aggressive!" or "Use them trunks for legs and them broad shoulders of yours to protect the ball!" Now not only did I have to sacrifice my academic application to try and make it in football, I also had to play a role wanted by my coaches. My identity was reduced to an over concentration on my physicality. I had strived since joining the academy to improve my technical ability and tactical awareness, but it quickly became evident coaches did not pay attention to that effort or wish to develop me beyond my physical capabilities. I was even told I should "go and play right back instead of central defence because I would not have to think too much and can just get up and down the flank". Such comments reinforced racial stereotypes by emphasising physicality (pace and strength) and that I was not technically and tactically intelligent enough to play centrally.

Thoughts of education were obsolete. I had no time to dwell on education; my only focus was to play well and move on to a bigger team. Just train. Get better. Improve. Push on. Coaches told me of the possibilities that were there for me if I trained hard and listened. I was ambivalent. I felt they were lying to us with these empty promises. I knew I was chasing a false dream. Engaging in additional qualifications demonstrated a lack of commitment to 'how much you really wanted it' in my opinion, or that was how I perceived it. Time spent in education would be better served on the pitch and in the gym, following the blueprint my sporting icons had shown me in the Michael Jordan & Kobe Bryant documentaries I watched as a guide to life. They reinforced that hard-work and sacrifice pays off. Over time I struggled more and more to motivate myself. Furthermore, my attitude towards the coaches and life outside football started to deteriorate. Restricted I saw no other option. I had no idea of what else I wanted to be. I coasted through my first year at the Academy and it was only when I began my second and final year it dawned on me that the dream was over.

Once I had completed my two-year apprenticeship, I knew that there was no route for me into the first team. Now I was in crises, but again what else could I do? Believing I was going to be a professional footballer, I had not applied myself to my GCSE's. Come to think of it, I had not undertaken any education or further qualifications seriously. In retrospect, although developing a high-performance athletic narrative (see Douglas & Carless 2008) in my latter school years provided direction and a sense of empowerment, it also made me feel that the only way I would ever be celebrated was through my sporting achievement. Now, for the first time, my attention turned to how I might be successful outside of football.

### ***Going to University as an acceptance of failure***

In my footballing circles, going to university was deemed as an acceptance of failure. You have accepted you are not going to make it. My mum had always nagged me about going to university but truthfully, I had no idea what university was. I just knew that my mum said I was going if football did not work out. Having to work to earn a living, I secured a job in retail where most of my colleagues were part-time workers and university students. I spoke of my failed career as a 17-year-old footballer on the scrapheap, once destined for the big time, now stacking shelves. I told everyone that I was receiving trials, so I am just biding my time which was commonly met with a wry smile. The more I worked with these people, the more they sold university to me. My colleagues spoke of a heightened sense of independence, freedom and an intellectual challenge. They spoke glowingly of future careers and earning potential and seeing it as a fresh challenge. The thought of living in a new city, meeting new people and removing myself from everyone who only knew me as the talented footballer would be an excellent remedy for my failure. Keen as I was to shake the failed footballer tag off which weighed on me, I hastily enrolled at Canterbury Christ Church on a Sports & Exercise Science degree.

Weeks went by and I started to identify as a student, not a “failed” footballer. I thought life would be miserable once I left football, but on the contrary, I realised I was far more miserable playing football and was happier in academia. There was no glass ceiling, I can achieve whatever I want without having to rely on chance. I realised my hard work could get me where I wanted to be. Not off the hope a coach would give me a chance. I finally started to apply myself in my studies. I implemented the same organisation, discipline and dedication to my studies as I did toward my football training. I started feeling good about myself again. I found part-time work as a fitness instructor at the Universities gym. Being an ex-youth player, alongside being a qualified personal trainer who is studying his BSc in Sport & Exercise Science made me highly attractive for employment in that industry. Before my footballing CV barely got me a training session at some more prestigious clubs. This was in complete contrast to my experiences in football. Football had knocked my self-confidence, education bought it back. As I completed my degree I fell in love with Sociology of Sport. My lecturer (who became my tutor for my post graduate study) was passionate about it that’s why it resonated with me. I was fascinated by race and its effects on sport and vice

versa. Reading texts by Ben Carrington, Kevin Hylton, Paul Campbell were so thought provoking and insightful. I also rejoiced to find they were black males like myself. When I read their work, at times it was like I was reading my own lived experiences regarding structural barriers and racial stereotyping that I had experienced in football. I approached my lecturer to oversee my progress on my undergrad thesis and it was agreed that I should write an auto-ethnography on my experiences in football. On completion I realised there was so much more to that I wanted to explore. I had now grown a sense of empathy, and I wanted to further my research to help other young black, male footballers who potentially experienced what I did. I wondered if the racial stereotyping, structural oppression and limited educational opportunity I had seen on my reflection through my newly crafted sociological lens was the same for everyone. Exploring these experiences would also help illuminate the lack of emphasis on education and narrowing/limiting of career options outside of football if players.

### ***Aims and objectives***

The experiences in the narrative above highlighted my growing sociological imagination and development of critical self-reflection. Voicing my biography in this way I reflexively situate the body I research and write through. Holloway and Bailey (2011) spoke of how qualitative researchers cannot exclude themselves from data collection, analysis, and reporting of the research. Bearing this in mind, I began relating my own experiences of being a young, black, male footballer to others by thinking *through* my body. Taking this into consideration, this thesis seeks to explore the experiences of young black male footballers who have been at professional football academies in England. It seeks to shed light on the prejudice and oppression encountered both in terms of 'making it' in the professional game and educational opportunities provided. The following questions were used to guide these investigations:

- What are young, black, male footballers' experiences of racial stereotyping in professional football academies?
- What are the attitudes of young, black male footballers in professional football academies towards education?

- Does the academy system adequately prepare players for professional lives outside of football?
- What are young black male footballers' perceptions of education and are these restricted through structural, social and cultural barriers?

In doing so, I will seek to engage in qualitative research methodologies. I will undertake interviews with current and ex Afro-Caribbean youth-team scholars and engage in participant observations at football academies as well as gain the opinions of major stakeholders in national initiatives (e.g. Kick it Out) in relation to these objectives.

## 1. Conceptualising Race

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In the introduction above I provided an auto-ethnography of my experiences of football and education and how my racial identity influenced the reproduction of certain stereotypes that limited my opportunities. To more critically analyse the construction of race, the following review seeks to provide an overview of alternative ways race is conceptualised. *Firstly*, alternative ways of theorising the concept of race is considered. *Secondly*, a historical perspective is taken in exploring how racial stereotypes are constructed. *Thirdly*, the influences of these stereotypes are considered in influencing identity construction amongst young, black athletes.

### 1.1 Conceptualising Race

Race is a contested concept that has social, psychological, biological, historical and political dimensions. For Hylton (2018), the term race is significant not only as a socially constructed concept, but also as an ontological truth, and so, should not be used uncritically. He highlights the paradoxical nature of the term race. On one hand the very existence of race has been challenged, on the other, race is seen as a social construction and is therefore a phenomenon that can be analysed. Ferriter (2019) said race is a categorisation that packs a punch even while it floats like a bee." Given these theoretical dilemmas, Hylton's work focuses much on lived experience, so as not to reduce race to an "objective condition or to an ideological construct."

Whilst acknowledging these theoretical debates, it is this approach to the lived experiences of race that informs my own thinking. Therefore, as the starting point for this thesis, I outlined personal reflections of my own body. This not only acts as a departure point to theorise race but also as a justification for empirically exploring the experiences of young black footballers. According to Ahmed (2002) racialized bodies are not just a case of being demarked by skin colour, but are inscribed with meaning:

One's 'racial identity' is not simply determined by the 'fact' of one's skin colour. Racialisation is a process that takes place in time and space: race is an effect of this process, rather than its origin or cause. So, in the case of skin colour, racialisation involves a process of investing skin colour with a meaning such that 'black' and 'white' come to function, not as descriptors of skin colour, but as racial identities. (p. 46)

To understand what is termed by race, we must also understand embodiment as it is the body that is the site of the inscription, production, performance and lived experiences of raced identities over time within alternative social contexts. Ahmed (2000) makes a convincing argument that, race is an effect of racialisation, not its cause, and that 'the racial body' is a product of racialisation. To live a racialized body is therefore to live through a body laden with meanings of socially constructed knowledge about understanding race which is experienced culturally and temporally through the daily social encounters we engage in with others. Those who inhabit a raced body have historically been constructed as the inferior and opposite to the rational prototype of the white body, which is marked by its invisibility, as Stein and Andreotti (2017) highlight:

[Race]...manifests through specific, relational, and frequently overlapping vocabularies of subjugation that emerge in varied histories and contexts. This grammar sanctions the violability of Indigenous, Black, and other non-white populations at individual and structural levels, and justifies the expropriation and exploitation of their labour and the land and resources in places where they live. (p.156)

Given these historical, cultural, social and embodied constructs of race, and the 'naturalisation' of multiple forms of oppression, the following definition offered by Ferriter (2019) will be used to guide discussions that follow:

Race is a system of classification that is socially defined and culturally constructed. Lacking a biological or genetic basis, race is a social category whose effect creates local inequalities and global differences and is applied to then justify those conditions as natural (p.23).

This definition provides the basis upon which the term 'racism' has been understood, both a localised and a global level. Given the context of the phenomena under study, exploring the

experiences of young black footballers in the local social arrangements of football academies but located within the 'global game' (Giulianotti, 1999).

## **1.2 Racism**

Ferriter (2019) further elaborates that race acts as a 'floating signifier' through which boundaries are marked and the rules of inclusion and exclusion constructed, informed by historically specific conditions. These demarcations of race lead to racism. Racism can be defined as a collection of attitudes, actions, structures, or policies that lead to the oppression, subjugation and subordination of people due to the colour of their skin or cultural determinism (Sue, 2003). Racist beliefs, behaviours and actions are informed, both consciously and unconsciously, by misplaced assumptions of racial superiority and racial dominance that provide justifications for maintaining hegemonic racial hierarchies. Trepagnier (2010) stated that racism means different things to different people and different social and cultural groups may think about racism in different ways. Racism affects individuals and social groups, and can be systematic, institutionalised and perpetuated. As sports sociologists, we must be aware that emphasis should not be on the individual to effect change through individual agency and enactment, but through broader structural, institutional, cultural and political change. As Hylton (2018) discusses:

The forms of racism that seem slippery, ambiguous and less visible are the manifestations that are most insidious and requiring of particular clarification in the sporting arena where there is a pre-occupation with overt manifestations. A pre-occupation with overt racism engenders complacency among institutions, forcing them to be reactive while individual acts, although constructed as punishable, buffer the collective from blame. (p-12.13)

Indeed, individuals that do act to experiences of racism have been accused of playing the race card, suggesting that "structural obstacles and everyday microaggressions are excuses" positioning racism as inconsequential and open to strategic game playing rendering race as irrelevant" rather than focusing on structural change. Exploring conceptualisations of race and identifying and nuancing forms of racism such as 'playing the race card' and developing an activism in response to these multiple forms of oppression has come to be known under the umbrella term of Critical Race Theory (CRT).

### **1.3 Critical race theory (CRT)**

Scholars have drawn on many academic fields study including postcolonial theory, indigenous studies, black studies, feminism, and poststructuralism in developing a critical approach to race. Through these disciplines, a set of intellectual tools have been provided that help develop a deeper understanding of race and racism that helps identify, challenge, provide resistance and offer solutions that liberate and empower those that inhabit and embody racialised identities. This approach is known as CRT which as Solorzano (2015) defines as “an explanatory framework that accounts for the role of race and racism [and] works towards challenging racism as part of a larger goal of identifying and challenging all forms of subordination”. CRT has been employed in educational (Stein and Andreotti, 2017) and sporting (Carrington, 2010) contexts and has been central in “challenging established epistemologies and ideologies, liberation and transformation of racialized power relations, and debunking notions of meritocracy, colour-blindness and objectivity” (Fletcher and Hylton, 2019). In doing so, CRT has provided a useful tool to reveal a clearer understanding of the race, sport and society nexus and facilitate a critique of personal, cultural, institutional and structural arrangements. According to Hylton (2018) CRT’s central characteristics are as follows:

- I. The centrality and permanence of race and racism and their intersections with other forms of subordination
- II. A challenge to dominant ideologies of meritocracy, colourblindness, race neutrality, objectivity and ahistoricism
- III. A commitment to social justice and the disruption of negative social relations
- IV. Transdisciplinarity that fosters disciplinary cross-pollination and syntheses
- V. The centrality of experiential knowledge and ‘voice’

Importantly for this study which seeks the experiences of young, black footballers, CRT recognises the lived reality of race and racism and “pragmatism that underpins iterations of the term race as it retains little traction in science” (Fletcher and Carrington, 2019). CRT also encourages an activist scholarship that is evident in the openly ideological position I undertake during ensuing



discussions. This study therefore recognises CRT and works within its liberatory intentions without explicitly referring back to and legitimising its use.

### **1.4 Construction of racial Stereotypes**

Racial stereotypes constructed through mistaken and/or misinformed categorisations of people – politically, biologically, culturally and socially. All bodies may be classified ordered and engrained with understandings in ways that influence lived experience. This, I hope, is evident in my auto-ethnographic vignette introducing this thesis. Reflecting on his own upbringing as a son of Jamaican parents, Hylton (2019) articulates how he was subjected to being stereotyped as ‘naturally’ good at sport given the colour of his skin:

Assumptions of natural ability in football, athletics and cricket were flattering facilitators of insiderness and hegemonic masculinity, yet at the same time those assumptions based upon racial stereotypes were also inferring other things about intellectual capacity and propensities for success in academic as well as sporting domains (p.88).

Like my own experiences, Hylton was stereotyped in terms of his bodily and intellectual and capacities. Although this contributed to constructing a valued form of masculinity, it created narrow definitions of identity both inside and outside of sport, which was ultimately belittling and restrictive. In this section I shall be looking at how historical, political and cultural understandings result in given stereotypes of the black male body:

#### **I. Black men, deviance and criminality**

Black men have consistently been prime targets of white supremacy (DuBois 1965; Woodson [1933]2000; Ladson-Billings 2006). Brown and Jackson’s (2003) state that the Black male is a ready-made construct formed by the repetitive narrative which describes the Black male as problematic. Sealey-Ruiz and Greene (2015) imply that society often takes its cue on how to treat Black males based upon the past and current stereotypes about Black males and the representations of them. When the Black male is viewed from a deficit lens, in there represents a misreading of who they are as individuals. The misreading of black males’ transfers into how they are treated in classrooms and often leads to how black males are ultimately treated in the academy and society-writ-large. “Derogatory stories of the black males as deficient, criminally minded, and

sensual individuals were first used to validate the enslavement of Black people” (Johns 2007). Orbe (1998) said today’s representations of black men in sport seems to have not changed and the media have been criticised for perpetuating an essentialist and stereotypical discourse of black manhood as inherently angry, violent, physical, stupid, sexually aggressive and animal-like. Fanon (1967) highlighted to the reader that the Black male exists as the construction of the white mind, not that he actual is any of these phobias or fears, but that he appears to be these things in a society that shares these phobias culturally. He also said the lack of an explanatory account as to why the Black male body is peculiarly dehumanized within patriarchal racial logics leaves the multiple levels of vulnerability Black males experience unexplored and untheorized.

## **II. Biological determinism**

The black footballer at this time was marked as considerably different from their white counterparts. There was a need for ways to justify the black male’s dominance in the sporting realm. This is where science was bought in to justify differences in race through Biological Determinism. ‘Biological determinism is the tendency to view human social phenomena (at the individual, group, and societal level) as the products of biological causes’ (Ellison and Wet 2018). This is a phenomenon that still to this day some believe. They went on further explain that this way of thinking has been challenged as it has proven to involve logical fallacies and cognitive errors that are prone to social and political bias and serve to “naturalize” pernicious social effects. Previous studies have shown how black male’s identities have been constructed long before black athletes could play football. It is important to look at the chronological order of the black male in football to get an insight on how their identity came to be constructed. Vasili (1998) study showed that black players represented 4% of the playing staff of league football in the 1970s, increasing to 25% in the 1980s and declining to 15% at the end of the 1990s. According to Horne (1996) the racialized football environment can be traced back to the spectacular rise of Black (predominantly Afro-Caribbean) athletes to the forefront of English sport with often ambiguous rejoicing of newspaper headlines such as ‘Black Magic’ and ‘Black Power’” (Cashmore, 1996). Expressions of hostility toward black players became the norm for crowd behaviour as well as the incitement of far-right groups such as the National Front who were given discourses of anti-immigration

sentiments concurred by the white working class, the major consumers of professional football at the time. Giulianotti's (1999) article went further to say that matters were further exacerbated by the policies and rhetoric of the Thatcher government. The rhetoric in question focused on the threat provided by Britain's ethnic minorities to the "British character and way of life," equating Britain's Black communities with the foreigner "intent on importing their nationality to our nation". Thus, Black people were consistently portrayed as being outside the realm of British national culture and as the enemy within (Horne, 1996; Solomos, 1988)

### **III. Black masculinity**

Gender and race scholars have asserted previously that White Supremacy Patriarchy (WSP) is the ontological and corporeal authority that shapes the controlling images, experiences, and resulting oppression perpetuated against People of Colour (Cooper, 2005; Ferber, 2007; Hooks, 2004; Leonard and King, 2011). They said that the WSP has used public discourse about black men, promoted through media, to construct "acceptable" forms of Black masculinity. Colourblindness ideology, binary depictions, and commodification of black men were said to have existed as the foundation upon which specific stereotypes about black men have been constructed and used to promote WSP norms for black men to follow. These 'acceptable' forms for black masculinity have become the standard or the "hegemonic" norm against which all black men are measured. Public discourse provided by the WSP has disseminated the illusion that black men can obtain the same socio-political privileges awarded to White men, if Black men perform masculinity as delineated by the WSP. Previous literature alluded to the point that this illusion has been perpetrated through media narratives about young Black men transcending their deviant socio-cultural backgrounds to become more like white elites (Collins and Cooper, 2005; hooks, 2004). They (Collins and Cooper) also spoke of how colourblind discourse has perpetuated unchecked binary portrayals of Black men by depicting successful Black athletes as having transcended their deviant subculture into the idealized, assimilated sports hero, and by contrast, violent criminals who need taming and control. Maintaining the binary depictions of Black men has built controlling images of black masculinity that have provided narrow codes of conduct for black men to follow if they want access to the resources, status, and power granted to White men. Ferber (2007) discusses how the media tends to highlight the stories of young black male athletes who

were raised in impoverished conditions, but through hard work and sacrifice had become sports heroes.

#### **IV. Playing Black**

'There is powerful pressure to be the 'subservient black man' to appease white men in sport' Fanon (1967). The psychological pressures of racism imposed on black players and the performances expected of them to get a contract to become part of, but not necessarily integrated into, the white 'football family' is extremely difficult. This process leads to black players having to develop a performance, a certain socially delimited role, tailored to the fluctuating demands of white coaches and managers. This issue of complicity, and the associated problems black players face in reconciling themselves to forms of racist comment that are unconscious to white men. It has been said the black man, especially in sport, find their place in the social world through their relationships with white men. This theory of identity formation is useful in the context of football, when black men relate to white men and adjust to the stereotypes made in relation to their body and the cultural changes needed to fit in. Fanon illustrates the pressures placed on black men to survive in a 'white world', which is also pertinent to the complex and contradictory world of football:

Not only must the black man be black, he must be black in relation to the white man. In the white world the man of colour encounters powers in his bodily schema, consciousness of his body is solely a negative activity. It is a third-person consciousness. The body is surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty. He discovered his blackness, his ethnic characteristics, battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, and slave ships. (p112)

#### **V. Naturally gifted**

There has been a tendency to believe in the black athlete being more naturally gifted. Such beliefs have been interpreted within the Bourdieuan concept of "habitus," in which "the body is viewed as a site of social memory which involves the individual culturally learning, refining, recognising, recalling and evoking dispositions to act" (Bourdieu, 1990). This is the black male athlete internalizing their own athletically gifted stereotype and acting it out accordingly. Cashmore (1996) elaborated on this point by saying "it is not only whites who have bought the myth of black natural talent in sport; black people have also accepted it and clung to a tin pot theory that has performed a disservice." Hoberman (1997) also stated the ideas about the 'natural' physical talent

of blacks, and the media-generated images that sustain them, probably do more than anything else to encourage the naive pseudoscientific view that blacks and whites are different in a physically meaningful way. The way journalists and broadcasters stereotype athletes based on race significantly affects how people perceive athletes of different races. Ferrucci, Tandoc, Hong, Almond and Leshner (2016) found a large amount of research on racial stereotypes in sports journalism shows a clear trendline stating that content analyses find disproportionate treatment of athletes during broadcasts of athletic events. The way as to which black male athletes may be forced to take on these constructed identities were discussed further again by Alexander (1996) when he spoke of the inability of black athletes to partake in the construction of their own identity due to a deep-rooted association of black culture with 'racial' identity. This attributes to blackness as a fixed and permanent status. Black athletic success is explained as natural, ignoring the black athletes as active agents who work to shape their own performances. The denial of the agency of black athletes implies that black athletes do not have to work hard to be successful in sport and thus, by extension, that white athletes, who are perceived as lacking natural ability, achieve success due to hard work and intelligence. These notions reinforce the stereotypes that blacks were naturally lazy, and whites are naturally more intelligent than blacks. This can also be seen alongside the brain versus brawn dichotomy, binaries appear across racial stereotypes that align with the born athlete against a developed hardworking athlete. An example of this can be seen by Lewis, Bell, Billing and Brown (2019) when they reported how media coverage would depict white players as "great" and "poised," which highlights the hardworking narrative applied to white players. Whereas Black athletes are "quick-twitched" and a "stud," a term also applied to a male horse used for breeding.

## **VI. Stacking**

Stacking again is a phenomenon that comes up readily within all literature with regards to the black male's experience within sport. Medoff's (1986) paper on Positional segregation and the economic hypothesis included his explanation of stacking within the role model hypothesis,

whereby black emulation of successful black athletes takes place. He also went further to state the differential attractiveness of positions hypothesis, which is based on the possibility that “blacks either select or avoid positions that offer maximum opportunities for participation” (Maguire, 1991). This was further reinforced when several participants within his study stated that role models were the reason why they made their decisions to play in certain positions. In support of this point, Chappell et al. (1996) concluded that present findings in the field “infer that successful black athletes are serving as potent role models to black British youths, who, in turn, view them as blue-prints for their own development” A common theme of this research is the formation of and reference to stereotypes and judgments based on race. Evidence from various sports, particularly, football in the 1980s, demonstrates a widespread use of racial stereotypes. For example, black players were characterized as “not working hard in training, not being any good once the pitch gets muddy or the weather gets cold and not having the ‘bottle’ to be defenders” (Burley and Fleming, 1997). A preliminary analysis of ethnicity and sport in Britain gave a sociological analysis of race and position assignment in 92 English football clubs during the 1985-1986 season resulted in several compelling facts. He found that black players were overrepresented in the wide forward and fullback positions and in roles that stress speed and quickness; they were also underrepresented in positions that require decision-making and intelligence (e.g., central midfield position). Maguire (1988) ascertained that “the evidence supports the contention that blacks are assigned to positions by white managers on the basis of racial stereotypes of abilities”

## 2. Race and Football

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In this chapter the literature with regards to race and football will be discussed. Issues that will be discussed are the history of race in football, racism in grassroots football, the player/coach dynamic, dressing room banter and life at a professional football academy.

### **2.1 Race in football History**

The history of English football, relates to the 'preservation of certain notions of white male identity and authority.' (Carrington, 1998) Expressions of hostility towards black players became a regular feature of crowd behaviour during the 1970s. Crowds were often incited by far-right groups such as the National Front and fed by the anti-immigration sentiments of the white working class, which were, in turn, stoked by the policies and rhetoric of the Thatcher government (Giulianotti, 1999). Black people were consistently portrayed as being outside the realm of British national culture and incompatible with it, a situation whereby being Black and British constituted something of a paradox. Afro-Caribbean's became perceived by the White mainstream society as the "enemy within" (Horne, 1996; Solomos, 1988). This is where the construction of the black male's identity as different to their white counterparts could be developed by the media. The type of perceptions that black players highlight during the 1980s can be linked to the theories discussed previously, that black players functioned through their body without any cognitive reflection. Giulianotti (1999) laid the blame for the continuance of the situation at the door of the "insidious, deep seated and 'normalized' racism within football's mainstream institutions." This is classed as institutional racism, another phenomenon seen readily within research of the black experience in sport. Consequently, it is proposed that such judgments and stereotypes are likely to affect the basis on which the interracial athletic relationship is initiated, developed, and maintained. Norris and Jones (1998) highlighted that with a greater percentage of Blacks occupying forward as opposed to midfield or defensive roles which are positions traditionally associated with instinctive as opposed to organizational qualities, a further perceived justification could be found for their exclusion from nonplaying capacities. Thus, Blacks appear locked in a stereotypical embrace, in which they play in positions that are not only racially stereotyped but are also not considered good management

material roles. Fletcher and Richardson (2018) also highlighted to the fact in their study that once a playing careers are over, fewer Black players progress onto senior authoritative positions within the game, such as head coach, referees, scouts and club owners.

## **2.2 Racism and Grassroots football**

Cashmore (1982) presented a negative ideal type of black family life in which black families in Britain are 'unsupportive', which leads to black children being 'culturally disadvantaged'. He spoke further on the school and sport systems and how it compensates for some limitations of the black family:

It is tempting to see the source of black kids' sporting involvement and success as the family. A rough-hewn psychological explanation would hold that, because second generation Caribbean's and Africans in England are raised in single-parent families, in almost every case the parent being the mother, the children pass into an emotional void at the ages of 13 or 14 and seek out father figures in the shape of sports coaches with whom they form compensatory attachments. (p. 79)

He concludes that, for black children, sporting achievement compensates for academic failure, resulting from racism within the school system. Another interesting observation was that sport becomes a mechanism to elicit good behaviour from black men, which they then colonize as an 'ethnic territory' and are consequently seen to have a one dimensional and singular form of worth which can only be valued through sport. It also forges their identity without their knowledge and causes them to believe at a young age that the only way they can be successful is through sport. It could also cause the school's faculty to push the child towards sport to discipline the child. This could also be emphasised by their parent's child if one parent is absent. Horne (1996) gave claim to start at the lower end of football for research purposes saying that focusing on the lower level of football culture could be more beneficial in understanding the differing forms of attachment to, and identification with, the game for black players, as these everyday levels are "important sites for consolidating and possibly transforming racist attitudes." This could mean starting with research into grassroots football which is overran by the county FA. It is the county FA's that govern local football across England. While these organizations have traditionally enjoyed a low profile, both in the media and academic research, it has previously been suggested that County FA's are often



discriminatory in their interactions with British ethnic minorities. County FA's also fail properly to reflect their local football demographics, with County FA personnel being overwhelmingly white (99.7%) and male (97%). (The Guardian: Football's biggest issue': the struggle facing boys rejected by academies, 2018). It is often said that County FA's represent all their members 'fairly' by making decisions for the 'good of the game' and not being influenced by external economic or political factors, henceforth equity initiatives are often seen as merely pandering to excessive 'political correctness', further challenging the supposed view that sport 'is either naturally neutral in such considerations or a promoter of harmony. These Victorian sporting ideologies harbour interpretations of race that could date back to early initial encounters with the colonized 'other', than those better suited to contemporary multicultural Britain. As such, these ideologies exclude ethnic minorities within local football by both resisting change that is aimed at better accommodating the excluded, while also continuing to exclude others by calling upon traditional ideas of race. Interestingly the dropout rate of children in football is consistent with dropout in child and adolescent sport more generally, the authors suggest that future research on dropout needs to expand the scale and scope of enquiry to include, among other things, the interactions between the individuals and the environment (Players and the Local FA's). This, they argue, will help develop a deeper understanding of the cultural constraints that help explain why children and adolescent's dropout of football, and better inform future policy intended to stimulate participation in grassroots football.

### ***2.3 Coach/athlete relationships***

Jowett (2007) stated that people's understanding of themselves can be influenced by their specific race/ethnicity which, in turn, defines their unique cultural context. Establishing the quality of an athlete's relationship with their coach is imperative as this can have a profound impact for the athlete both on and off the field. The cultural differences in how people view and learn about the world is limited and little is known about the impacts that an athlete's race/ethnicity may have on the effectiveness of different coaching attributes, styles, and/or techniques. Consequently, race/ethnicity consists of norms and expectations that can influence people's actions and interactions,

perceptions, and experiences. An example of this can be seen in Solomon et al (1996) study on Expectancies and ethnicity: The self-fulfilling prophecy in college basketball. The study went on to reveal that coaches have different expectations of athletes from diverse backgrounds and treat athletes of ethnic groups differently as a result. Jowett (2011) indicated that racial issues can affect the way interpersonal constructs such as closeness, commitment, complementarity, and co-orientation are experienced in the coach-athlete relationship. The study highlighted potential benefits within the relationship/dynamic by raising ethnic and racial awareness within the coaching community. Such awareness and sensitivity on the part of coaches relative to athletes who come from minority cultural backgrounds may prove advantageous in developing coach-athlete relationships that are both effective and successful (Jowett and Poczwardowski, 2007).

#### ***2.4 Race and dressing room banter***

A common theme that came from the literature was the dynamic of dressing room banter and how it can be of a racist nature. Comments of a racist nature/undertone were accepted by respondents as being 'part and parcel of the football environment, if a black player was to have a long career they should not and not take themselves too seriously.' (Jones, 2002) Dressing room humour can often be made up of racial slurs, including the promotion of negative racist stereotypes, which were intended to have disparaging effects on the black out-groups, while simultaneously developing the status, recognition, and prestige of the perpetrator within the larger and more powerful white in-group. Such action inevitably creates the concept of boundaries, complete with the incumbent notions of inclusion and, more importantly in some context's exclusion (Alexander, 1996). The willingness of many to laugh off such comments could be viewed in terms of a coping strategy regarding perceived inequalities and prejudices in the situational structure. The response of the black subjects in laughing off such remarks reflects their need for acceptance within the group, thus using their collective sense of humour as an integrative and cohesive strategy for the team. Players would say they wish "not to rock the boat" by taking issue with teammates over racist banter. Others generally agreed that this was the only path to take if one wished to stay with the club and not give an impression of having a "chip on their shoulder." A typical phrase coined for black athletes who seemed to take themselves too seriously and with the propensity to be volatile.

This is offered to black players who have the accusation of being 'over-sensitive' or 'temperamental'. Black players may find it difficult to identify racism and to hold white men accountable, when racist 'industrial language' is seen as a legitimate form of competition between men, and as a normal part of being a professional football player. This may have the effect of disempowering black players in terms of challenging the use of such language and changing the culture of the industry as dictated by white men.

Black players' resolve in dealing with racist remarks from other players will depend upon how the remark is heard and to what extent it becomes naturalized in relation to their consciousness. Black players learn that their compliance is rewarded by not being thrown back to a world in which they have no more privileges than the average black person outside football.

## ***2.5 The Black Student Athlete***

With education becoming a familiar theme within the literature I came across, there was a need to gain a deeper understanding of education and the black student athlete. With the American collegiate system being the way students' transition into athletes, it is important to research the NCAA collegiate system. The National Collegiate Athletic Association is a member-led organization dedicated to the well-being and lifelong success of college athletes (NCAA). According to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), academic success for college athletes is equated to maintaining eligibility. For Division I athletes, this includes "progress-toward-degree" policies which necessitate college athletes advance toward graduation annually (National Collegiate Athletic Association [NCAA], 2012). College athletes must demonstrate academic progress by completing a percentage of their required coursework (e.g., 40% at the end of second year, 60% at end of third year, and 80% at end of the fourth year) (NCAA, 2011b). These findings made it obviously clear that there is some benefit to conducting similar research within England. With benefits including increased academic success, improved self-esteem and improved player performance, the need to research the experiences of black male youth athletes in football was necessary.

## ***2.6 Blacklisted: Life in contemporary football academies for young black players in England and Career Transition***

Young black males gain a sense of empowerment, identity and belonging through physical performances of the body. However, many young black males are guided down potentially limited and restrictive paths to success in developing a positive sense of self. In other words, these are the only ways of developing a sense of capital and empowerment. As a result, broader educational opportunities are inhibited and marginalised as secondary to performance. This is no more evident example of this emphasis on the black performing body in England than the graduation of footballers into the professional football clubs after secondary school. An emerging and worrying statistic is that only 180 of the 1.5 million players who are playing organised youth football in England at any one time will make it as a professional in the Premier League, a success rate of 0.012% (The Guardian: Football's biggest issue': the struggle facing boys rejected by academies, 2018). Young black footballers become 'blacklisted' through their engagement in academies, with limited opportunity to develop future education/career pathways. This has caused research on career transitions in sport to grow. As a result investigators have found various predictors (e.g., athletic identity, personal development) of the quality of the career transition process for athletes (Lally, 2007). In a study conducted by Park, Lavelle and Todd (2013) they reported that some of their participants expressed career transition difficulties or negative emotions, including feelings of loss, identity crisis and distress, when they ended their career and adjusted to post-sport life. In line with the experiences of the black male athlete, two studies which demonstrated transitional differences between Caucasian student athletes and African American student athletes, African American athletes experienced more transition difficulties (Perna, Zaichkowsky, and Bocknek, 1996).

## **2.7 Research gaps and objectives**

Given the above review of literature, many research gaps exist. These are now summarised theoretically, empirically and methodologically.

### **I. Theoretical gap**

#### **Critical Race Theory (CRT)**

A suitable framework for exploring the Black male footballer's experiences at the academy is Critical Race Theory. CRT offers a "race consciousness" to unveil the cultural assumptions and presumptions implicit and explicit in the way's society is structured. It illuminates the myriad of overt and covert ways in which race may be operative. The tenets of CRT, according to Hylton (2009), include (a) the centralizing of race; (b) the challenging of race-neutral, colourblind ideologies; (c) a commitment to social justice that includes liberation and transformation; and (d) a centralizing of the culturally marginalized voice. CRT contests and interrogates the racial neutrality of the educational experience of Black male footballers in this regard. It posits that the interactive modes of human agency (at the personal, intermediate, and collective levels) that sustain and or impede the educational experiences of Black males are fundamentally rooted in macro- and micro-elements of race. As race may be operative at various personal and contextual levels to impact individual agency, social cognitions, and collective consciousness, CRT and SCT are organic conceptual companions from which to understand the Black male youth footballer's phenomenon.

### **II. Empirical gap**

There has been a dearth of research when it comes to black male youth footballers, especially in comparison to their American equivalents (the black student-athlete). In England, youth footballers will leave secondary school and go into full-time training with a professional football academy and may start earning an income once they sign their first Youth Training Scheme contract. This is unlike our American counterparts where a student athlete must complete a minimum of year of academic studies to be eligible for selection to professional ranks. They are also unpaid until they are drafted to a professional team. The only benefit they receive is education via a sporting scholarship meaning their course fees are waived. This potentially further reinforces the notion within England that the only way a black male can be successful is by being a sportsman.

They will stand to benefit from cultural capital quicker than their counterparts once they have signed their contract. This could mean that the youth footballer in the England perceives no emphasis on education as it is not a prerequisite for a player to gain academic achievement to become a professional. Therefore, it is key to find out what the black male youth footballer believe or deems academic success is. By finding out their attitude towards education, we can start to begin to see what caused this phenomenon. A great amount of research has been done regarding race in sport in England. Much of the data centres on its effects on those who experienced it at a time when racism was in a more overt form. However minimal has been done recently on the newest form of racism which pertains to be institutional racism as well as unconscious bias and dressing room banter. With much data focused on dressing room banter in the more established first team dressing room, it is key to see how banter affects those in the academy dressing room. Even less research has been done on the experiences of race by black footballers within the youth academy and how the academy is educating the young player. Research seemed to be focused on those higher up in the game, (i.e. first team professionals at Premier League clubs).

Though this is still a key and valuable way to ascertain understanding of some phenomenon in football, the need to tackle the problem at grassroot level formed my belief to start research within the black male's attitude towards their education whilst in school. This would be done to investigate the reason as to why there was a perceived narrowing down of opportunities for other careers for young black males due to experiences in school,

### **III. Methodological gap**

There has been much written in recent memory on the question of race, sport, and identity. However, there has been limited engagement with ethnography to explicate these issues and even fewer accounts that have explicitly used forms of 'reflexive autobiography' (Carrington, 2008). Jones (2002) study was based up on interviews with semi-professional footballers. The research design was an interpretive one, in which qualitative methods of data collection and analysis were used. This approach was intended to provide a greater insight into the range of complexities of behaviours and the participants' perspective of their experiences than could be generated from quantitative methods. Thus, in fields of inquiry about which little is known, such as the chosen area

of study, 'qualitative techniques can be a sensitizing tool to the kinds of issues and problems involved' (Faraday and Plummer, 1979). Such a method can also allow the development of grounded analyses of the complex ways culture and social processes are interlinked and expressed, while assisting in making connections between personal troubles and social issues (Mills, 1959). This was the closest and most appropriate study to draw some methodological ideas from for my study. I wanted to use semi-structured data and immerse myself within the data to illicit a richer narrative from my participants. Being an ex-footballer with an understanding of possible experiences in sport I was able to draw upon my own Auto-ethnography to help with my research. This was scarce within England. This form of research would be key in obtaining rich narratives from my participants. Auto-ethnography is the attempt to develop a reflexive account of the self that opens to critical interrogation of both the researcher's own biography in relation to those studied and the very act of inscribing or narrating that ethnographic story. In short, turning the analytical gaze back on the researcher to dissolve or at least problematize subject/object relations within the research process and even that we have a unified, fixed, and singular self (Carrington, 2008). Being a black male with experience within the youth academy, the use of reflexivity and my auto-ethnography would be vital and beneficial for my study. As DuBois (1965) puts it I am "bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh of them that lives within the veil" of race. This all uniquely identifies a research gap. I wanted to answer the following questions:

- **Black youth footballer's attitudes towards education**

*What are footballer's attitudes towards education?*

*What were their attitudes before, during and after academy life?*

*How was their transition from school, to academy, to future careers?*

- **Experiences of race within youth academy football**

*What were the experiences of race regarding their feelings of self?*

*What was the relationship like between their coaches, their peers?*

*What were their experiences of dressing room banter?*

### 3. Methodology

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This thesis sought to explore the experiences of black footballers and their educational journeys within youth football at professional academies. I was keen to ascertain if my experiences differed from other young black footballers as well as their perspective on education. As I was going through the youth system, there were many like myself who had hoped and aspired of becoming a professional footballer. With many young males in general failing to make it as a professional, I was keen to find out their experiences before, during and after their time within an academy. The purpose of this research was to find out what the experiences were during their time as a scholar and to uncover the narrative of their journey into their current career path. Given this focus, as well as the research questions highlighted in the introduction, a qualitative approach is most suitable.

#### **3.1 Qualitative Approach**

Qualitative research is an umbrella term given for multiple methodological approaches that locates the observer in the world and central to interpreting social and material phenomena. As Denzin (1978) summarise, emphasis is placed on uncovering the subjective experiences of individuals, and how they react, reflect and engage with the social world for their own reasons. Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers' study topics in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, and phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research is also a form of social inquiry that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live. Charmaz (2004) points out that we enter the phenomenon to discover what is significant from the viewpoints and actions of people who experience it in relation to time, place, context and situation – and people. She also notes how qualitative research celebrates discovering the take-for-granted meanings that inform their actions which, for the most part, are tacit, liminal and implicit. Further calls for researchers to appreciate what is happening in a setting, exploring what meanings hold for participants:



Meanings render action and intention comprehensible. Actions can make implicit meanings visible. We observe our research participants grappling with making sense of their lives, and then we grapple with them trying to do so. (Charmaz, 2004, p.981)

Qualitative researchers tend not to work with 'variables' that are defined by the researcher before the research process begins. This is because they are interested in the meaning attributed to events by the participants themselves. Using preconceived variables would lead to the imposition of the researcher's meanings and it would preclude the identification of respondents' own ways of making sense of the phenomenon under investigation. This inductive and participatory approach necessitates me as the researcher entering the phenomenon. 'Entering into' is often described as an emic perspective. The primary concern is the quality and texture of experience, along with its dynamics and development as a process over time, rather than with the identification of cause-effect relationships. I used my own auto-ethnography which allowed me to underpin some of my experiences relevant to the study. This was helpful in developing the right questions to ask which would illicit a response necessary for data collection.

### ***3.2 Philosophical underpinnings***

Certain philosophical assumptions inform the approach described above. As the researcher, I am the 'instrument' in qualitative research who will be collecting, analysing, interpreting and representative qualitative data. Qualitative research is 'a craft skill that to master takes time, practice and intellectual engagement' (Demuth, 2015). It is, as Denzin (1978) point out, a field of inquiry in its own right that cuts across disciplines, fields and subject matter. They note that a complex, interconnected family of concepts and assumptions surround the term, and that qualitative research, as a set of interpretive activities, privileges no single methodological practice over another. I therefore adopt a relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology. A relativist ontology takes the 'assumption that realities are plural and subjective' (Denzin, 1978). Relativist ontology is the belief that reality is a finite subjective experience, and nothing exists outside of our thoughts. Lincoln and Guba (1985) said reality from a relativist perspective is not distinguishable from the subjective experience of it. A subjectivist epistemology is underpinned by the assumption that 'knowledge is socially and culturally constructed through interactions with others in given

contexts and environments' (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). Having a subjectivist epistemology means recognition on the part of the researcher that they cannot understand the data from a purely objective stance so begin to construct a theory that will simplify the complexity found in the data. These ontological and epistemological positions inform an interpretivist paradigm in where I hope to make meaning from the experiences and interactions within the social settings that I am immersed in. This approach holds much strength. An inductive approach allows me to be open and flexible with my explorations allowing deeper interpretations of the other realities.

### **3.3 Access**

When approaching a football club or governing body for help with gaining contacts relevant to my sample group, I encountered some difficulties. In one instance I was told that the issue was being researched by in-house researchers and that they did not require any further assistance but were interested to see what I had so far. Interestingly, when I spoke to a participant who himself had attempted to investigate issues of race within sport, I was told that this was a common response. He went on further to state that this is how governing bodies react when they do not wish anyone else to research these types of subjects. Issues such as race, sexism, and homosexuality are all deemed 'taboo'. They are purported to be high on institutional agendas within football and governing bodies, yet institutions were protective and generally not open to research that would potentially identify and call for change. This resistance meant that I had to approach relevant people directly rather than being introduced via an organisation. Having previously been a part of an academy within the youth system of football in England, I understood the set-up and overall logistics of the system. I had built prior relationships with key people within football who would act as 'gatekeepers.' A gatekeeper can be defined as one who is a 'member of or has insider status with a group' (Cresswell, 1998). The gatekeeper in this instance was a 47-year-old male who had a twenty-year career within the football league who now oversees an inclusion team within a major sporting governing body. Being involved in football for over twenty years, I found this enabled me to gain access to the relevant participants I wanted to interview. This approach proved easier than approaching teams or governing bodies to gain access to my relevant subjects. I

decided to approach those relevant to my sample directly via e-mail, phone calls, social media and personal meetings. I found it beneficial when approaching potential participants to openly discuss my own experiences in football with them and the reason as to why I have decided to conduct this research. I found this in turn made the participant more open to sharing their experiences with me. I put this down to having relatability to the participant as I am a black male who understands both the experiences and discourses constructed in relation to football. My status of being an ex-footballer and signification of my race allowed the participant and I to have a common ground. The participant felt at ease with discussing any experiences or issues they had. For example, a participant called Dean said:

Dean: Come on, I am sure you know what it's like! You know how it goes, you got to a new club, even worse when it's outside of London, as soon as you walk in they literally watch you like a wildlife documentary. They are just trying to suss you out, it's mad uncomfortable init!?

These issues were discussed with me with a sense of relatability, they spoke as if I knew exactly what they were going through. This approach to sampling, in which I turned to black participants directly to become participants and being reflectively aware of my own race I term here as *"Going through the black door"*. Reflexivity requires critical self-reflection of the ways in which researchers' social background, assumptions, positioning and behaviour impact on the research process. It demands 'acknowledgement of how researchers (co) construct their research findings.' (Finlay and Gough, 2003). Vannini and Waksul (2008) speak of reflexivity as somatic work. Reflexivity for them is the activity of turning back on oneself, or the action of taking the role of the other in examining oneself. In sum, reflexivity means seriously taking into consideration the researcher as a mindful body; 'a body that is obviously and inevitable present in the research process' (Vannini and Waksul, 2008). I became aware of the importance of taking this reflexive approach early in the research process in gaining access which eventually lead to a meaningful sample. Importantly, I also learned that attending to the intersubjective dynamics between researchers and researched was important to continue throughout analysis and interpretation.

### **3.4 Sample**

Qualitative research inherently works with a smaller sample size than that of quantitative research. The aim is to gather in depth understandings, rather than broad data that analyses trends or relationships. Sampling in qualitative research is best described as purposive or purposeful in which an attempt is made to gain as much knowledge as possible about the context, the person or other sampling units. Researchers choose an individual, several individuals, or a group in whom they have an interest and who they feel will provide 'information rich' cases based on them having specific characteristics (Cresswell, 1998). To build a sample that would adequately shed light on the phenomena under investigation, multiple qualitative sampling strategies were employed. Criterion-based sampling a predetermined set of criteria for selecting places, sites, or cases, perhaps guided my investigation most of all. Participants are chosen because they have a feature, attribute or characteristic, or have a specific experience. These were as follows; i) participants are or were part of a professional football club academy in England; ii) players had their education provided by their football club; iii) participants Afro-Caribbean heritage. Two retired ex-professional players were also interviewed who currently work at two governing bodies within football. I wanted to uncover their experiences to see if they, unlike the scholars who didn't become professional, would encompass their transition from playing career to another career path. The two ex-pros were still working within the football industry. This would further help me to find out whether the experiences they had through youth football helped them in any way for their careers after playing. I decided to approach those within the relevant sample groups directly as earlier alluded to earlier within the text. As mentioned earlier my race as well as my socialisations and understandings of the hyper-masculine code of football assisted me with this. Having discussed the above, the following sample comprised this thesis:

- Andre 27, was born in East London. Of African & Caribbean heritage. He was released from his Championship club aged 19 (3 years at academy level). Went to semi-professional clubs before focusing on university full-time. Graduated university with a Business Management degree. Still plays football semi-professionally and works full-time as a Project Manager.

- Ben 27, Born in South London, African-Caribbean & White. Released from Championship club aged 21 (3 years at academy level). Played for other professional teams before deciding to work full-time. Currently working his way up as a coach.
- Charlie 27, Born in South London, Caribbean heritage. Released at 19 from Championship club (2 years at academy level). Went to university graduated with a degree in Sports & Exercise Science. Now works full-time in Media.
- Dean 27, Born in South London. Caribbean heritage. Released at 19 from Conference club (2 years at academy level). Moved around Semi-professional clubs whilst working part-time. Finally decided to attend university. Graduated from university with a degree in Sports & Exercise Science. Now works full-time as a Personal Trainer.
- Eric 27, Born in South London. African heritage. Released at 19 from League 1 club (2 years at academy level). Played semi-professional and combines with full-time work.
- Freddy 50, Born in North London. Caribbean heritage. Retired at 39 after 17 year career in Championship, League 1 & 2 as well as Conference (1 year at academy level). Started coaching alongside studying Business management degree at university. Stopped coaching now works full-time work within football. Also conducts research on racial issues in football.
- Gavin 47, Born in North London. Caribbean heritage. Retired at 39 after 17 year career in Championship, League 1 & 2 as well as Conference (1 year at academy level). Started coaching alongside studying Business management degree at university.

### **3.5 Data Collection**

Interviewing was the primary method of data collection. A qualitative research interview is a “social activity where two or more persons actively engage in embodied talk, jointly constructing knowledge about themselves and the social world as they interact with each other over time, throughout a range of senses, and in a certain context” (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). The purpose of an interview is to create a conversation where participants are invited to tell stories, accounts and descriptions about their experiences, feelings, perceptions and behaviours in relation to the research question. However, as Sparkes and Smith (2014) remind us, an interview is not a transparent window into the experience of the participant. The talk within interviews is shaped by social factors including the motivations, emotions, age, gender, race, class and disability of both researcher and participant, as well as the context of the interview. It also makes the assumptions about knowledge. Interviews were therefore adopted as unique interchanges that made up part of an active, collaborative, and dialogic process that was dependent on situation and context (Atkinson, 2005; Holstein and Gubrium, 2003; Fontana and Frey, 2008). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant. This allowed me to use a pre-planned interview guide to direct the interaction whilst still engaging in prolonged, meaningful conversation (see Appendix 9.2). This type of interviewing relies predominantly on open-ended questions. The line of question was split into the following subjects in question:

- *Early experiences of football*
- *Socialisations into football subcultures*
- *Experiences of attending a football academy*
- *Life after leaving the academy*
- *Education before during and after the academy*

The participant can reveal much more about the meanings they attach to their experiences, thereby providing the interviewer with deeper knowledge about them than could be gleaned from a structured interview. I followed Wolcott’s (2005) guide to better interviewing including recognising

listening as an “active and creative role”, checking for meaning, asking respondents for feedback to help me become a better interviewer, and assuming a “one down” position where I took the subordinate position wanting to learn from the experiences of the other, rather than the “one up” role assumed by the “scientifically orientated hypotheses tester”. The interviews were conducted at my house and at two of the participant’s house. Conducting the interviews away from the participant’s professional setting allowed for a more relaxed atmosphere. Two were done via telephone and one was done on site at a conference. Initially, I fell into the common traps of a beginner researcher, asking confusing, leading, and over theoretical questions and rigidly followed the interview guide in a bid to “maintain some sense of control over a seemingly uncontrollable event” (Taylor, 2005) However, with patience from participants and my increased experience, interviews became more fluent in elucidating the extended narratives of interviewees.

### ***3.6 Field Relationships***

I had previously written an auto-ethnography on my own experiences in football. This helped highlight my experiences of oppression as a black footballer which in turn allowed me to reflect on: i) positioning myself in relationship to my participants; ii) developing a line of questions to ask; iii) developing a self-reflexive and empathetic approach to research. This helped me in developing relationships in the field and critically reflecting on them in the research process. Academically exploring my own experiences and self-reflection was central in identifying how football has helped construct my identity in both positive and negative ways. As issues of race are experienced differently, the questions I prepared, and the way research was undertaken was the same for each participant. Throughout my time in the field some issues and dilemmas were encountered. Research is not a straight-forward practice where a set of guidelines can be followed. I had to use my interpersonal skills, demonstrate patience and be able to reflect and be critical. This was key in building a rapport with the participant. Rapport is a close and harmonious relationship in which the people concerned (i.e. the interviewee and I) understand each other's feelings and perspectives. An example of rapport that I found within my time interviewing was when a participant described their initial feelings of being released and the battle with some mental health

issues such as anxiety, isolation and depression. These were all an array of feelings I had felt due to myself being released. Building a rapport allowed me to penetrate the participants answer and ask further questions that were not initially included in the question bank to elicit more information on the phenomenon alluded to by them.

Nyall: Do you remember your first initial mood when you were released?

Andre: Ye... Actually no, I was alright you know, like I was down, but not depressed or felt like I was going insane, just a bit pissed off. It was annoying and it was hard to digest, I did not know what I was going to do next.

Nyall: It's a confusing time I know. It happens and you know it is coming but when it comes it is still unexpected. What were your feelings at the time, can you remember?

Andre: Exactly that! The anxiety was killing me. I never felt at ease, just constant restlessness. So many things were going on in my mind. I did not know if my friends were going to see me the same, if my girlfriend would still be with me, was my mum still proud? Like I don't want to do or know anything else to do with my life. I swear I did not answer my phone or leave the house for about 4 days straight one time, don't know why, I just physically couldn't. Come to think of it now, shit! I was suffering with something!

Having myself dealt with a similar issue to the participant, I was able to ask questions that were not too invasive and build a question which would best illicit a genuine response. Being able to highlight my experiences with being released with them, you could visibly see the participant exude passion and discuss his thoughts on the matter with no inhibition to their answer. Rapport due to ethnic background was also built. Much research before has been done before in the sporting context with regards to race. However predominantly the studies were conducted by non-black researchers. One of my participants who was interviewed about his race for another study not similar to mine highlighted how he felt a level of discomfort in describing his experiences and feelings with a non-black interviewer for fear of causing offence.

Charlie: Whenever they interview to us I always felt like they were trying to catch us out. Like they want to catch you saying something or doing something odd then report it and then your name is mud in the game. They would not understand how I see somethings and when you try to talk about it you can just see the blank look in their face. But I can tell from you and your study that this is here to help empower us and nothing else.



This was not an issue due to us having similar identical background and experiences. It was key for me however to not ask leading questions which forced a participant to answer the question in the way I wanted the answer to be constructed. Sometimes, I worked at distancing my own experiences to concentrate on interpreting the others experiences so as not to make assumptions. Being the first-time I have conducted interviews, this at times was challenging.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Cresswell (1998) spoke of the challenges found in qualitative data analysis is to take steps to interpret data in meaningful ways without detracting from essence and meaning. Qualitative data analysis is not rigidly standardised, can take many forms, and is flexible to fit individual studies. There is no “correct” way of approaching the data but it must be eventually reduced to produce a unified picture of the phenomena. Analysis was therefore a creative process requiring carefully considered judgements about what was meaningful in the data and was approached inductively as themes emerged from the data itself. Once data was collected, I then decided to use thematic analysis to organise and paint a picture of the phenomena. This allowed me to explore key meanings to participants and organise into key chunks. Thematic analysis is described by Braun and Clarke (2006) as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data.” It allows for flexibility in the researcher’s choice of theoretical framework. Some other methods of analysis are closely tied to specific theories, but thematic analysis can be used with any theory the researcher chooses. Through this flexibility, thematic analysis allows for rich, detailed and complex description of data. Thematic analysis is accompanied with constant comparison as described by Maykut and Morehouse (1994). This was undertaken in the following phases; Inductive category coding and simultaneous comparing of units of meaning across categories, then refinement of categories. Followed by an exploration of relationships and patterns across categories. Finally, the integration of data yielding an understanding of people and settings being studied.

I did not search for the ‘right’ themes but recognised them for what they are; links between segments of data and the categories used for conceptualisation. Further interpretation leads to linking words together to form chunks of data or “codes” of higher order themes. Analysis began immediately after entering the field and was an on-going process. This allowed research design to

emerge over time, encompassing changing directions and unexpected findings and provided direction for further data collection. Interpretation began when my thoughts moved beyond data and I probed for the specific meanings that young black footballers attributed to their experiences. This required constant questioning to crystallise themes of meaning. As analysis continued, initial conceptions were changed, merged or omitted and new categories were generated, condensed, clustered and linked.' (Goetz and LeCompte, 1981) allowing new relationships to be discovered. Due to the limitations of this thesis, 'saturation' was not reached, but I feel that data analysis has allowed for an in-depth representation of the phenomena.

### **3.8 Representation**

Qualitative researchers take principled and informed decisions about how to write up or represent their studies. These approaches should align with theoretical and methodological research strategies. As Sparkes (2007) illuminates:

Researchers, whatever the paradigmatic persuasion, need to develop a reflexive self-awareness regarding the rhetorical and stylistic conventions of the tales they tell in order to bring the tales within the author's explicit methodological understanding (p.10).

Within my thesis, I wanted to communicate a compelling story of the experiences of young black footballers. Therefore, in the findings section I predominantly employ a 'realist tale' (Van Maanen, 1988; Sparkes, 2007) characterised by:

- *Experiential author(ity)*: my voice is generally absent in the text
- *Promoting the participants point of view*: original and authentic quotes from the participants themselves are incorporated
- *Interpretive omnipotence*: current theory is outlined that frame, make coherent, and enhance the authors interpretation of what is happening

However, I modified this realist tale in this thesis at various points. I provided an auto-ethnographic vignette to introduce the theses and position myself as a black, ex-professional footballer. I also provide first person accounts of 'being there' in the methodology sections. At times, I also adopted features of a 'confessional tale' from Sparkes (2002) by revealing mistakes I made during research.

I conclude the thesis by offering a personal narrative where I reflect on how my sense of self and understandings of the other has changed and evolved during research. The inclusion of multiple voices has helped me communicate the *process* of research and the critical self-reflexive journeys I travelled. Most importantly, as imperative in CRT I wanted to emphasise the black voice. As Sparkes (2002) indicates, this requires making ethical and reflexive choices on which voices to include:

Whose voices are included, how they are given weight, along with questions of priority and juxtaposition, are not just textual strategies but are political concerns that have moral consequences? How we as researchers chose to write about others has profound implications, not just for how readable the text is but also for how the people the text portrays are 'read' and understood (p.159).

These strategies therefore align with my philosophical, theoretical and conceptual frameworks used in this study. They also aim to evocatively and powerfully help the reader empathise with experiences of the young, black, male footballer.

### **3.9 Goodness Criteria**

As alternative philosophical assumptions inform qualitative inquiry, alternative forms of judgement are required that destabilise traditional scientific notions of validity, reliability and truth (Sparkes, 2002; 2007). However, attempts to challenge these accepted norms of objectivity have been met with hostility. I use a 'letting go' approach which suggests that the term validity should be abandoned and instead be replaced with alternative criteria (Sparkes, 2002). Under this perspective, multiple sets of criteria are forwarded and critically discussed, through 'lists' that characterise traits in different qualitative tales. Taking this into consideration, I modify lists forwarded by Richardson (1990) which are to be used in judging this study:

## Emergence and inductiveness:

- Have I collected and analysed data dynamically 'as it occurred'?
- Have I been courageous enough to abandon any anticipated themes and (re)present what is actually happening?
- Have I maintained an empirical approach driven by the voices of young black footballers?

## Width:

- Are the data collection and analysis methodologies I employ adequate and effective in exploring young black footballers sense of oppression
- Do I provide opportunities for the reader to make their own judgements on the interpretations I make?

## Coherence:

- Has **internal** coherence been demonstrated?
- Is a unified representation of the experiences and behaviours been provided?
- Can individually located, culturally and temporally specific experiences be followed?
- Do findings represent how young black footballers themselves understand their lives?
- Has rapport and intimacy been developed with participants?
- Has **external** coherence been demonstrated?
- How do findings sit with existing theory?

## Insightfulness and contribution:

- Have findings encouraged the reader to reflect upon their own lives and embodied practices?
- Have findings challenged assumed forms of knowledge?
- How do findings develop existing theory?

## Evocativeness:

- Have I represented the richness of embodied experiences of young black footballers?
- Have I evoked a response in reader?

## Reflexivity:

- Have I reflected on my own sense of embodiment and how this is presented, performed and interpreted in the field?
- Do I recognise cultural narratives my own body is saturated in?
- Am I able to identify and challenge the masculine knowledge through which I have previously constructed my understandings of the world?
- Do I acknowledge my openly ideological position and the body through which I represent my findings?
- Have I demonstrated capacity for compassion and empathy?

**Figure 1:** Judgement criteria employed for this study

### **3.10 Ethics**

Ethics was obtained by the section of Sport and Exercise Sciences review board. The purposes of the study were stated to participants (Appendix 9.3; participant information form) my personal contact details (e-mail address, mobile telephone number) were provided and participants were encouraged to be using to discuss any anxieties they may have surrounding research. Consent was obtained from all participants and steps taken to protect confidentiality including assigning both places and people's names with pseudonyms (Appendix 9.4; consent form). Participants were reassured that the contents of the interviews were private, with transcripts and recordings placed in a locked safe in a secure location throughout the duration of the study and wiped clean on completion of the final written report. As Patton (1990) reminds us, research is an intervention, affecting people's lives, thoughts and feelings and has potential to cause emotional and psychological distress. Therefore, a statement of risk was outlined, and participants were informed of their right to voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time. Although research may be "intrusive in reopening old wounds" (Patton, 1990) it can also be healing and the very act of sharing of stories be therapeutic, so possible benefits were also raised. In conducting and writing this research, I aimed to oblige my moral responsibility (Richardson, 1990, Sparkes, 2002) and take seriously the sanctity of my participants through remaining virtuous to the following:

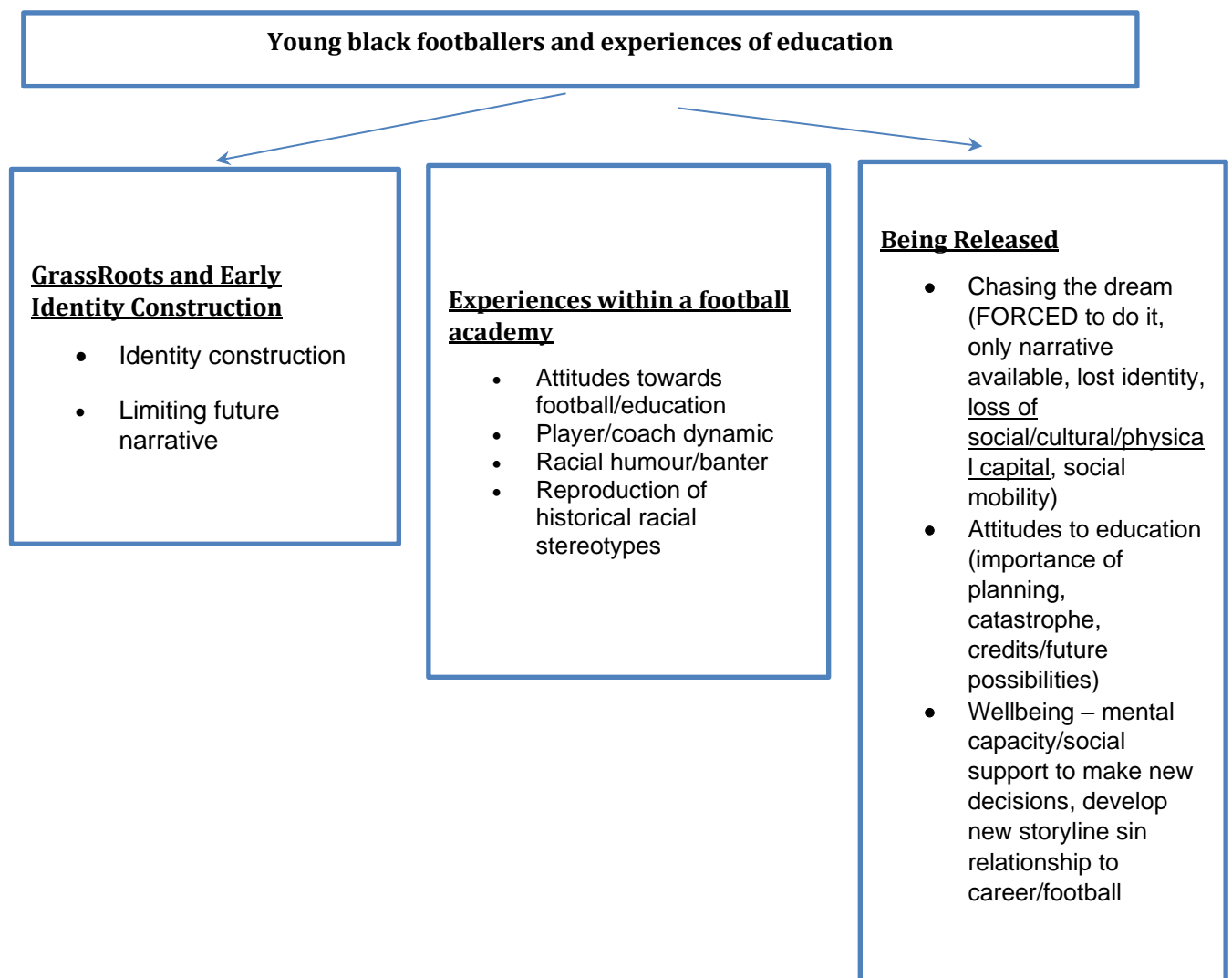
- I. Research was conducted in collaboration with, not about, young black footballers
- II. Research "listened" to the experiences of young black footballers with an emphasis on challenging oppression
- III. Commitment to 'giving something back' was maintained through using research to present at conferences and raise awareness
- IV. Confidentiality and anonymity were taken seriously
- V. Ethical dilemmas discussed through empirical data in representation

In taking an empirical approach, I hope at least to provide transparency, highlighting my attachment to my participants and passion of challenging racially informed oppression.

## 4. Identity Construction

### 4.1 Overview of results

During research, thematic analysis was then taken based on these three subjects which were structured into results chapters: i) Identity constructions of the 'naturally' gifted black player; ii) 'Blacklisted': Racial stereotyping in professional football academies; iii) Football, race and the restriction of educational futures.



**Figure 2:** Results flow chart

## **4.2: Identity constructions of the ‘naturally’ gifted black player:**

### **4.2.1 Biological determinism and physical capital**

Growing up, participants quickly internalised understandings that they were ‘naturally’ gifted for given sports. For example, Andre commented “I was *naturally gifted* when I was younger; I guess that’s why I chose to focus solely on sport”. This sense of natural superiority was reinforced by others, giving participants a sense of physical worth, as Charlie says:

Charlie: I was always told I was the right build for my position. From a young age the other boys would look at me with a bit of jealousy, I guess you could say I was athletically blessed and that separated me.

It is interesting here to explore how players interpreted themselves as “naturally gifted” or “athletically blessed”. For Charlie, such assumptions arose from an ontological comparison with other boys, however this rationale is reinforced by being ‘told’ he was the right build for his position. Like other participants, Andre and Charlie came to understand themselves as being physically dispositioned to excel at sport. This reproduces biologically deterministic ideologies that hold that genetic differences can be used to explain complex psychological and social phenomena (Guillaumin, 1988). In this case, participants came to know themselves as naturally physically superior for the sport of football. Accordingly, participants began to focus more on sport from a very young age as they felt that they were predisposed for a high chance of success.

### **4.2.2 Cultural location and football as choice**

In the geographical area where this study took place (South East London) it was the cultural location that determined *which* sport was played, and excelled at, in constructing the black athlete. This is demonstrated in the following quote from Andre:

Nyall: So, what made you start playing football?

Andre: I think it was the just the only sport you do where I am from. Growing up in South London everyone plays football, so it seems like the sport that you take up and because everyone is doing it, it’s the one where you can make friends. Like you see other kids

your age doing it so you tell yourself, let me play. It was all for fun really, you played football for fun so that's why I did it. Football you do not need anything, like you go to the park and use a ball and jumpers and you will be playing for hours. Other sports require more equipment, supervision and that. This was simple. Your friends knock on your door and say come out and play football. I do not ever remember being asked to come to the park for some tennis or rugby.

Andre states that growing up in South London, perceived to be an under privileged area, football was the predominant sport. It was the norm or the only sporting narrative to engage in. This is particularly significant given that London is heavily concentrated are of people of black heritage (3% of the nation's population is black and London's overall percentage of black people being 13%) (*The Guardian: Football's biggest issue': the struggle facing boys rejected by academies*, 2017) Choices in relation to what sport to play were also reinforced by media narratives of local black sporting hero's offering a better life. This is articulated further by Andre:

Andre: Also, I remember seeing the likes of Ian Wright driving around my area sometimes. Then I would see him on Match of the Day, then he had his own TV show. All of that came from being good at football, everyone loved him where I was from. My dad always spoke of him in such high regards. I wanted that acclaim. He also made it later on too (22 years old). Coaches always said that to me from a young age. Seeing that I could be like that made me play a bit more too.

The media has highlighted the stories of young Black male athletes who were 'raised in impoverished conditions, but through hard work and sacrifice had become sports heroes.' (Ferber, 2007). This illusion has been perpetrated through media narratives about young black men 'transcending their socio-cultural backgrounds to become more like White elites.' (Collins, 2005; Cooper, 2005; hooks, 2004). This feeds the neo-liberal assumption that if one chooses to work hard in their sport, they can become successful just like the black athlete in question who has "made it." This serves as inspiration for the black youth. This in turn will cause the black youth athlete to focus on his sporting ability, neglect his non-athletic identity and then use the successful



black athlete as a career guide or even their own personal identity guide. This can be seen in how early perceptions of P.E. were formed.

#### **4.2.3. P.E. and construction of the black male athlete**

From early success in sport, participants were drawn to P.E. within school. Here, through demonstrating their 'natural' ability and 'innate' physical capacities, participants felt valued. Being good at sport and physical activity outside of school, translated to success and construction of athletic senses of identity in school. This helps identify why some of the participants wanted to start playing football in the first place:

Dean: My P.E. teacher would always pick me to deliver the demonstrations in class. I was always a captain when it came down to picking teams in P.E. and that was not even just football! We would play rounders, basketball, dodgeball, cricket whatever it was, I would demonstrate, or I would be captain and everyone wanted to be on my team. It was even better when it was football though, people would hate being against my team, teachers would tell me to take it easy or limit me to only being able to play with two touches. I never got this type of attention anywhere else, not at home, not in maths, history, and science nowhere! It was nice. I felt like a celebrity, it felt like signing autographs when random teachers or guys in the older years would ask me about football.

It can be said that P.E. played a central part on the early experiences of Dean's life. Many participants saw the subject as a sport and believed it important in engaging in order to continue down the path of becoming a professional footballer. Over time, the 'education' part of the subject gained less significance, with more emphasis placed on the 'physical' in order to feed these objectives. In turn, less attention was paid in all other academic subjects as well, as determined my Andre:

Nyall: I want to start with your earliest thoughts on P.E. and Sports. What did it mean to you?

Andre: P.E. just meant doing sport. I was blessed to be quite athletic when I was younger, so it was something I kind of excelled in when I was in school. It's like doing maths, teachers knowing that you're good at maths and you're working hard at it, they're

always going to encourage you more to do it. I had that quite a lot in sport and even though I did well in other subjects, I excelled in sports and was always pushed to do it.

Nyall: Did you have a similar push in any other subject areas? You did say you excelled in other areas of education, were you pushed in the same way in those areas as you were in sport?

Andre: No. I was quite good when it came to maths, but I remember there will be certain times where I'm playing for different age groups that were higher up or doing loads of different sports in school because I was so good. So yes, I'd get pushed more so than I would in maths because even though i was decent at maths I never got any kind of special privileges.

As he is perceived to be talented by his school faculty, his focus is pushed towards sporting excellence to potentially attain a career in sports, but this is restricting in other ways. The push toward P.E./sport can also be reaffirmed by the gratification, acclaim and recognition a young athlete could receive when first exhibiting superior athletic prowess. This is showcased by this participant's response:

Gavin: I guess there's more prestige to it from the outside. So, people look upon it instantly as "He's really good at sports!" There's more limelight around it like you could become rich and famous. Whereas being good at maths, you're supposed to work hard at maths. I used to think to myself "what riches or success does being good at maths get you?" With sports it came easy to me. I also saw other fly young black guys a bit older than me living the life. I think that's why I thought I could make this my life.

The participant discusses how he received more attention for his sporting credentials or "limelight" as he refers to it. Lawson (1979) discusses how as the black youth athlete had experienced earlier successes in sport they were willing to sacrifice more in the way of part-time employment and cultural pursuits in order to attain a life as a professional. In this regard, this could be deemed as sacrificing education to pursue their goal. As the participants mind shifted from being good at maths as well as sport, Gavin eventually shifted his sole focus to P.E./Sport. The participant discusses the "prestige" that comes with being good at sport, a sense of gratification and acknowledgement from those around him for his talents. Where he had previously felt that there was no "prestige"

with being good at maths, the prestige of being good at sport was more alluring and gave him access to being in the limelight. Thus in turn he believes he received more support in this realm than if he were to have excelled in maths. Gavin also shows that there were no other options other than being good at sport shown to him. He did not know that excelling at maths could bring him an element of success, whereas being good at sport perhaps could. With the black male believing that becoming a sportsman is their only way to achieve success, the need to be physically fit and excel in sport is reaffirmed. However, with minimal emphasis on careers outside of sport which highlights a celebrated black male, the belief that academic subjects such as maths, science or English, falsely lead those to believe that intellectual capital is not important. This could be down to the lack of black male role models outside of the sporting context. Cashmore (1982) alludes to this matter when he said that for black children, sporting achievement compensates for academic failure, resulting from racism within the school system.

#### ***4.2.4 Attitudes to education pre-entry into academies***

It was important to oversee the shift in their earliest perceptions of education against participant perceptions just before entering the academy. I asked the participants how they started to perceive education after they believed they could become a footballer (within the year before they signed their YTS contract and joined the academy):

Andre: In my own mind I started to enjoy football more than I enjoyed being in school and education... you do take your foot off the gas a bit when you know that this isn't really what you want to do. Deep down you want to play sport and enjoy it because it's fun to do that.

Here a change was seen from Andre as he saw a potential career in football and stated that his academic prowess waned or "took his foot off the gas" as he so called it. This is the first instance of the narrowing down of future narratives for the youth athlete. This was spoken of by Edwards (1973) as he states that athletics stifles the pursuit of rational alternatives by black people. This

can be seen as a result of receiving little alternative professional narratives in which to succeed within any other academic practice except sport. Part of this limiting professional narrative, may not only come from enjoyment gained through football, but by little alternative offered. Furthermore, some participants were conscious that it was not as obvious as not just being able to see any black male role models outside of sport, the curriculum itself seemed to be saturated with cultural stereotypes:

Nyall: What do you mean by there were seen to be no real black role models outside of sport?

Charlie: I mean like you go to a Physics class they bang on about Isaac Newton, Maths it is all Albert Einstein. Science its Stephen Hawking. When I am in P.E. now it was footballers like Ronaldinho, Basketball players like Michael Jordan or LeBron James. Athletics its Asafa Powell or Usain Bolt. Even Cricket there was Brian Lara and Chris Gayle! Now not being funny but if you look at all those people, they were all greats in their fields but who do I most relate to? Obviously, I am going to identify with those guys, not the Einstein's and all that. I mean now I know there are loads of successful black people in all fields outside of sport, but I never saw that in school.

#### **4.2.5 Becoming 'professional' footballers**

It is now interesting to take a look at the youth athlete once they have made the step up from being in school playing junior football to being a scholar. Being a scholar was the precursor to becoming a professional footballer. Training was full time, and education moves from school to being undertaken 'in house' by the club itself. Players are educated by a tutor who will administer a BTEC National Diploma qualification on Wednesday mornings. This is taught throughout the year via lessons and broken down further with modular coursework. With the frequency of training much greater than the frequency of education provided, the transition from a student to an athlete here can be seen. Therefore, it is important to understand how the participant perceived their new identity at that time:

Nyall: So you are now at the academy as a scholar full-time, can you describe to me what you believed your identity was and what it meant?

Ben: The way I thought footballers were viewed by the general public, I thought everyone thought you were the man. Like he's a footballer, do you know what that means? He must have the coolest clothes, drive the sickest car, he must talk to all the girls and there was a certain swag that came with being a footballer or being branded as a footballer. I think as well, everyone wanted to be one. I was finally living out that dream of mine to become one. Something that all my friends wanted to be at school and I was one of the guys. There's an air of confidence about you as everybody knows you as a footballer. That was who you were that identity wherever you went. You went out and you were known as "The footballers", they play for ... . The identity was more important you knew who you were and you knew where you stood amongst people, amongst your peers, amongst other people as well, you just knew your, I wouldn't say social rank but you just knew your place in society. I loved it and I never wanted it to go, it was who I am.

The participant references material benefits from being able to have nice clothes and drive the best cars as important extrinsic motivations. From a working-class standpoint to attain these types of possessions might be difficult. Interestingly now, due to being within the lucrative world of professional football and the financial privilege it promises, he could perhaps afford to buy possessions such as these. This is indication of a young black athlete transcending their socio-cultural background. This is a form of social-mobility. Social mobility generally refers to the movement of individuals or groups between different positions within the system(s) of social stratification. More specifically, social mobility can be described as changes in an individual's social position which involve significant alterations in his or her social environment and life conditions. This is an example of how a black working-class male could use football to move into a higher socio-cultural structure.

#### **4.2.6 Identity construction and black physical capital**

At an early age there was perceived to be a common occurrence for a black youth player to believe they are naturally gifted. This is a common discourse put forward by society and coaches and this is evident amongst black football players in this study. Understood as embodied, yet socially constructing, Bourdieu's concept of "habitus" is here useful to explore how young black players come to understand their worth through various forms of 'capital'. Furthermore, it helps demonstrate how particular assumptions about forms of physical capital imbued by black footballers are reproduced within football academies by coaches. Habitus can be defined as "systems of durable, transposable dispositions" Bourdieu (1990). As Sparkes (2002) discuss, these dispositions become sedimented into people's understandings of themselves and positioning in the social world, shaping how people respond appropriately, and often unconsciously, to the situations in which they find themselves. The habitus is thus revealed by and constructed through the embodied ritual practices of everydayness that are learned over time and, as such, it has a history that links the flesh of individual actors into systems of social norms, understandings and patterns of behaviour. Different forms of embodiment are likely to predispose people to behave in particular ways as the body becomes a site of social memory and the social gets written into the corporeal. Habitus is therefore viewed as a site of social memory which involves the individual 'culturally learning, refining, recognising, recalling and evoking dispositions to act' (Jarvie and Maguire, 1994). According to Bourdieu (1991) demonstrating competence through these embodied dispositions constructs certain form of value, or 'physical capital' which in turn can be transferred into 'cultural' and 'economic' capital enhancing one's status and distinction in a given 'social field' (i.e. sets of localised social relations). The production of physical capital in this sense refers to the development of bodies in ways which are recognised as possessing value in social fields, while the conversion of physical capital refers to the translation of bodily participation in

work, leisure and other fields into different forms of capital. Physical capital is most usually converted into economic capital (money, goods and services), cultural capital (for example, education) and social capital (social networks which enable reciprocal calls to be made on the goods and services of its members). Amongst participants in this study, race was a key signifier of being pre-determined for forms of physical capital, which is subsequently manifested through participants narrowing and focused down at an early age how they can acquire capital.

Ben: There was a lad in the older year to me that played for the coach I was playing for last year. I used to look up to him, he was a striker as well and he was supposed to get a deal but I think he just had a bad attitude, but he always had the newest boots. I asked him how he can afford so many new boots all the time and he told me that this is what every striker secretly does. He told me to make a deal with my coach as he done that with him last season. He said ask him for £10 every time I score a hat-trick. Apparently, this coach loves to see little things like that because it shows that you are hungry to play and are focused on your match goals. So I took his advice and my manager and I made a deal that he would give me £10 anytime I scored a hat-trick and the team won. We kept it quiet so none of the other boys knew because it really shouldn't be happening, but it was my first time realising what I could get things with my talent come to think of it. I remember there was a new FIFA coming out that I wanted to buy, they were about £50 back then and my mum would point blank refuse to buy me anything like that outside of Christmas or birthdays. So I remember just saying to myself, I just need to score 4 hat-tricks to get it. I remember doing push ups and crunches before bed. I was practicing shooting with both feet in my back garden after school. I was dedicated to getting this game as soon as it is released. No one I knew could have done that by themselves. Obviously I scored 4 hat-tricks within that month

Ben discovered from an early age that his physical capital (football participation) could be converted into economic capital (money). This again further reinforces his sporting prowess will reward him financially and allow him to transcend his socio-economic situation which is commonly seen. This was all down to his participation in sport, something he is predisposed to doing.

#### **4.2.7 He's a natural**

Cashmore (1996) notes "it is not only whites who have bought the myth of black natural talent in sport; black people have also accepted it, and clung to a tin pot theory that has performed

a disservice". Therefore, understandings of 'natural' talent and biological determinism are perpetuated, and in this case internalised by participants. In other words, there was a reliance on particular forms of black physical capital. Intellectual or cultural capital gained through alternative forms of education in early identity constructions were not as valued, and did not appear quickly or with the same promise of material gain. This limiting of particular forms of capital is reiterated by Alexander (1996) who identifies the inability of black people to partake in the construction of their own identity beyond established norms due to a deep-rooted association of black culture with 'racial' identity, which attributes blackness as a fixed and permanent status." This can be seen through the following quote from Eric:

Eric: It was our day off and our manager said that we should all meet at a local leisure centre for some swimming as a bit of cardio and to limit impact injuries. I said I hated swimming, which I did and still do, guess it is because I couldn't swim! Then one of the lads said "yeah black guys can't swim because of all the fast twitch muscles in your body which makes you fast are also extremely heavy." He did not say it as banter, he genuinely believed it. What was hilarious was that the other 4 black players in the team, like myself could not swim either. For a long time that was what I believed though and I hid behind it at all time. I can't swim like Michael Phelps but I can run like Usain Bolt. I will take that! Obviously the older you get the more you realise that's a load of rubbish.

It is therefore again crucial to see that from a young age, participants were aware of being 'naturally gifted', in turn developing a sense of achievement, demanding attention and respect, feeling a sense of belonging which is possibly lacking elsewhere. Constructing a physically orientated identity however serves to narrowing expectations of self. In summary, this section I have identified how particular forms of understanding about black athletic ability are understood as physical capital, and therefore acceptance and legitimisation. However, this has led to fixed racial identity categorisations which are perpetuated as participants came to know themselves (and their futures)



through the development of physical capital alone, a fragile form of kudos which as will now be explained, is belittled and threatened.

#### ***4.2.8 The threat of black masculinity: Backlash against black physical capital***

Closely related to the developing of physical capital, was the association between black players and hyper-masculinity. Hyper-masculinity is a psychological term for the exaggeration of male stereotypical behaviour, such as an 'emphasis on physical strength, aggression, and sexuality.' (Connell, 1995). As such, sport is seen as a platform through which forms of hyper-masculinity are learned, performed and celebrated. The 'natural' ability of black players is therefore closely linked with black players being 'real' men. Conversely, early perceptions of the colonial black subject were to be known as uncivilized, primitive, "irrational non-subject." This was said to serve as justification for the traumas inflicted on them, and that the legacy of such a perception is still evident today. As a means of resistance, black men project hyper-masculinity to combat the feelings of powerlessness that are imposed on them by an "abusive and repressive" society. However, this merging of black identity and masculinity has overdetermined the identities black males are allowed to fashion for themselves", perpetuating negative stereotypes of all black men as inherently violent and dangerous. This was evident after an interaction a participant had with a new teammate just before the start of a game:

Dean: I stood in the tunnel and I saw the manager and the captain having a word with each other. They looked over to me and then carried on talking. Once they were finished the captain came over to me; "These guys are a bit naughty, don't lose your temper yeah lad?" He patted me on the back and strode to the front of the line to lead us out. At the time I just took heed and knew I may be provoked during the game, on reflection though I wondered why he thought I would predisposed to being volatile or dysfunctional? Looking back it all makes sense to me now.

This is an indication that Dean's teammates may have thought that Dean would be angry or volatile and ill-disciplined which would make Dean a liability to the team. This feeds back pre-conceptions of how black males will behave when provoked. This fits in well with the racialized stereotype of criminality of black males. This was stated by Brown and Jackson (2014) then who said the Black male and the Black male child are ready-made constructs formed by the repetitive narrative of Black males as problematic. The confusion arises as his team would want Dean to be as aggressive and abrasive on the field of play in a legitimate sense but will not allow for him to show the same emotions if he is provoked by others. They would want him to be aggressive for their own personal glory, but do not want him to be overly aggressive as it could mean his ill-discipline could be of detriment to the team. This is the thin line a black player must tread in order to remain. This oppresses his masculinity and his ability to properly defend himself. Black players perceived tendency for poor discipline can be illustrated more explicitly through the notion of having a 'chip on the shoulder'.

Ben: You are not going to be happy go lucky every day and come around with a massive smile are you? It goes without saying, but what I find difficult is that when you have a bit of a retaliation or you stand up for yourself when someone's taking the mick or you disagree with what has been said, you get labelled as a bad egg, sensitive or having a chip on your shoulder. Worst of all I have seen new guys come in on trial and if they aren't smiling or kissing the managers feet, they get labelled with this "chip on the shoulder" shout, and that will stick with you until you are done in this game. Football is a small world! The real problem is I only really see it as an issue with young black players though, anyone else comes in and does any of the above they are just seen as "passionate" or "focused"

This phrase became a racialized test of black players' abilities to integrate into the cultures of football. Football culture is based heavily on hierarchical structure and means that those in high positions in the changing room must be respected no matter what they may say or do. The idea of the 'chip on the shoulder' has often been used to describe people who have 'problems' with authority. Furthermore, other players, managers and coaches appeared to develop uneasy

relationships with forms of black physical capital exhibited by participants. Participants responded to this by actively playing a role as in disproving certain negative stereotypes of their race and masculinity to remain in the 'system'. For example, Charlie highlighted his difficulty in acting himself in the changing room:

Charlie: You can tell they are watching you with intrigue. They seem fascinated by you. But they always seemed to be hesitant around me, in turn that made me hesitant around them. I conformed to get by. I made sure I wasn't living up to any stereotypes. Like where black people are known for having attitude or whatever, I know I can't show that. No matter how many times I felt frustrated or wanted to speak my mind in my head I always thought "I'm not going to do that." Losing my temper or being late was never an option, even though sometimes it couldn't be helped. I felt like I had to do more to prove I belonged, there. I knew this could all go fairly quickly if i didn't.

This is an example of how a player is aware of a negative stereotype that may be put on a race and has to consider all behaviours to make sure they are doing the right thing to not reaffirm it. This reflects Fanon's (1967) work which detailed how the black man must conform into being subservient in order to maintain his place within the new found social setting. This is a phenomenon rarely seen with their white counterparts. However, being consciously aware of the negative black masculine stereotypes and not playing into them allows for the player to continue playing within the establishment. Black players therefore become self-reflexive of the construction and performance of their black, sporting, masculine identity. However, performing acceptable forms of black masculine physicality also worked in a negative way as one coaches perceived stereotype caused him to expect the player to live up to said role (i.e. fast and strong). As mentioned, speed and strength are two important skills within football and are two traits commonly linked to the black athlete. The following quote demonstrates how the coach wanted Charlie to be 'more-black' in demonstrating these qualities:

Nyall: Do you feel like you had to play up to the roles or typical stereotypes that come with being a black footballer?

Charlie: Potentially. I never wanted to rock the boat off the pitch and I had to fit the criteria that my coach wanted on it. My coach wanted me to be the ultimate physical presence of the team. He always told me I was big and strong, my technical ability was lacking but he knew I could run and jump and be his workhorse. To be honest if you look at it, you can't say that's racial, I now know that potentially could have been his idea though. "Oh yeah, this guy is black so he's big, strong, fast" kind of thing. In order to keep my place in the team, I made sure I stayed in the gym to get bigger and faster, he liked that and so I maintained my position in the team.

This demonstrates how coaches made assumptions of black footballer's capabilities and that these formed important part of the team. Fanon stated that acceptance by the white man is determined by the black man's ability to assume 'the other's' culture and language, to adopt the white man's standards of behaviour and speech using the white 'mask'. The metaphor of the 'mask' is both a public performance and an internal mechanism to survive the pressures of being essentialised simply as a black player. Charlie felt the need to play up to the role of being fast and strong in order to appease his coach, and gain acceptance into the football team. On reflection it was important to see how some of the experiences the young black athletes went through shaped their identities now, and in particular participants recognition that institutional racism is prevalent and they need to act and 'perform' their race in acceptable ways within these dynamics

Nyall: Do you believe you should have had a career in football, on or off the pitch?

Charlie: I knew I could have been a footballer, I'm actually looking at myself now and think; "Wow I used to play football." Feels like ages ago. I feel like the football system that is here now messed with me as I feel it's so hard to get ahead especially after coming out of playing at an academy, I couldn't be bothered to be dealing with the hypocrisy and the systemic racism and you can see that as you start looking at the managerial/executive positions.. All of the stuff you thought shouldn't really exist in football anymore was rife. I got tired of it, I got tired of having to button my lip when I had a question or not being able to have my own opinion on things because it's not the way that a coach saw it. I've grown to know, actually when you're a man and living in this world, it's okay to have an opinion. It's okay to question something especially if you don't believe it. It's okay to show weakness. Playing football everyday just meant I had to do the most to prove something to someone every day!

Charlie discusses how he no longer has to button his lip or feels unable to voice his opinion on subjects he did not agree with. When asked whether his race and constructed identity played a

factor in him not making it to the professional level, Andre believed that race did have a part in him not making it, however he highlighted other factors that may have attributed to it as well:

Nyall: Do you believe that your race played a part in you not making it in football.

Andre: Yes and No. No because I think certain people get that privilege of being singled out to make it and it's not a race thing. It's whether your face fits or the coaches like you as a person. And then Yes because I feel like, the people that have been at clubs for years and years or are captains leaders set it so you have to earn the right to have an opinion in football. You have to earn the right to have the bollocks to challenge somebody when they are wrong especially people that are higher up, that is the same for white players and black players. So as a young black player you wouldn't even consider piping up or disagreeing with someone. The second you do, you were history I felt. Once the word gets out that you have this "bad attitude" as a black man you're black balled. You've almost got to just agree and smile to get by. They need 1000 reasons to give you a professional contract, and 1 reason to not. Typically the "bad attitude" shout is the get out-clause. It is impossible to argue with that because it is all perception based.

In this statement the participant describes how you are unable to have an alternative opinion to those with a better hierarchical status than yourself and that you must smile and get on with the game in order to make it. Relating back to a principle of CRT, which denotes to recognise the experiential knowledge of persons of colour. CRT allowed for the critical reflection upon their social condition and provides Andre with a voice that challenges the dominant discourse and stories that have been based on White norms and privileges. In this case, this stems from Andre saying that clubs in question need *"1000 reasons to give you the contract, but 1 reason as to not."* I went further to ask him if this was potentially a reason as to why there are a lack of black managers.

Nyall: Do you believe that could be a reason there is a lack of black people in the higher executive positions in football?

Andre: One hundred percent. Having that whole ability to talk up. They don't really want you to be telling them what to do or running a club, they want you to run fast and jump high. I think the reason for that, is that we don't get that close to having that leadership. Only a handful of black players have been made captains and been looked at as this is the guy you need to listen to. Thierry Henry, Patrick Viera, These are players that had to earn their platform even to be considered respected. I feel it's very easy to give that to white players and then they feel confident enough where they say "because I've been so close to the manager, I feel empowered to go and do my badges and become a manager". With that bad attitude or chip on the shoulder talk for black players you would think twice before giving your tactical input or disagreeing with something. Whereas I feel like a white player could do that and be classed as being tactically aware. Then

again we are not meant to be tactically aware are we! Even when black players potentially do want to become coaches. There's always that "I don't know whether he'll be able to do the job." Yet they will take a gamble on some ex-pro whose face may fit a bit better. The black man always has to work twice if not five times as hard as someone in his same position to get that respect amongst his peers.

A key extract from the previous statement is how Andre believes black people within football have to work twice, if not five times harder than his white counterparts. This mode of thinking feeds into a typical phenomenon known in the black community which was hypothesised by Yetman and Eitzen's (1972) hypothesis from the standpoint of "unequal opportunity for equal ability." Although no specific evidence of discrimination was forthcoming regarding the issue, the sentiments were felt by in a study conducted by Jones (2002) it was felt by respondents in his survey that Blacks were very much subjected to the power of dominant groups in this respect (white boardrooms, in this context), who have not only used their position generally to structure sport in preferred ways, but also institutionalised and/or internalised these preferences, i.e. white managers/coaches. This is now discussed by concentrating on the internal social relations within a professional football academy.

## 5. Experiences within a football academy

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This chapter discusses the experiences of the black youth athlete within the academy. In this chapter I will be discussing the experiences within a football academy, education and its perception, player coach and its intersections of race and experiences of a black academy coach.

### ***5.1 The only way is football***

Once the youth player is in the academy, it is important to see their experiences. Education once again was a prominent feature to look at. The connection or engagement to commit to educational/academic ventures whilst at the academy was seen to be lacking on the player's side due to the emphasis shift from their academic studies whilst in school to football training at the academy. This in turn further limited other educational and career pathways. This shift was highlighted when discussing the participants view on education whilst at the academy:

Andre: There just wasn't a lot spoken about college education or outside of football with coaches. What was said is that you need to make sure the work for our college program is done. They literally just said make sure you're there, make sure you're on time, make sure you work is carried out or you could face not playing, so those things were done. But with regards to why we had to do it, its importance or benefits, nothing was said. The schedule was training Monday, and Tuesday. You went class on Wednesday morning, got your work done. Gym session after and back into training on Thursday. Game prep Friday, then game day Saturday. It was like 3 hours of my week.

Andre's answer gives an insight in the minute emphasis put on education at the academy. With the majority of the week spent training and minimal time being spent on education you can visibly see the shift and its perceived importance. This is showcased as there were a lack of reason as to why the sports course provided should be undertaken seriously but were instructed by the coaches that it "must be done." The lack of emphasis on the importance of education coupled with the increase in demand in the players training sessions leads the athlete to believe that they just needed to do enough to pass the course or "maintain eligibility". Even though the coaches were

telling the players they must attend college and complete work or face missing crucial games and training sessions, the contradiction comes in when there is minimal reason given as to why an education is necessary. Andre speaks of how he just done what was required on the Wednesday and then it was back to training. I harnessed the “Dumb Jock” mentality conceptualised by Edwards (1984) to interpret this theme. Gaston-Gayles (2004) study touched on the study further and it represented how college athletes spend a large portion of time practicing, recovering, traveling, and competing in their respective sport. These highly regimented schedules are organized in such a manner that college athletes find themselves isolated from the general student body population, and immersed in a sport culture which highly focuses on athletic performance, rather than academic performance. This can cause low self-belief in the athlete's academic ability. What was touched upon in previous literature was the Scholar Baller Paradigm. To counteract the singular minded athlete identity (Dumb Jock), some scholars have sought to emphasize the academic identity with the creation of the “Scholar Baller” paradigm. The idea of the “Scholar Baller” lends itself to using the same competitive nature that many athletes exude in their sport and ‘transferring it to the academic setting, thus helping athletes to truly engage the academic setting.’ (Gaston-Gayles, 2004):

Andre: I decided to study business at university and found I had some easily transferable skills from what I learnt at football and applied them to my studies. Even at university, I may not have been the most book savvy, but in terms of hard-work, something that I had been doing in football for years. If they managed to show us how relatable some of the skills from football were to business I would have tried to study business or go into some sort of business for myself ages ago. I was quite lucky that different experiences I had could be combined and allow me to deal with certain things. But other people who don't have that will find it very difficult. Punctuality, organisation and time-management I was shocked how far ahead of my class I was. Some kids had no discipline whatsoever. Eventually I caught up with the rest of my class over the years, but I know that was down to sheer hard work.



This statement shows that if the correct courses were selected by the athlete, there could be an increase in engagement as well as an increase in academic success/achievement. This could also positively increase one's self-respect with regards to their academic identity and non-athletic identity. Also shown was a lack of knowledge on what education/academic achievement is and how it can benefit one's life. Players typically focus solely on training with the belief that their performance will be the key to them attaining a better quality of life. Ben states how his education "took a back seat" and he was "doing the bare minimum." He also elaborates on why he believes he was exerting so little effort to his education set out by the academy:

Ben: I did not want to be seen putting too much effort in to other activities. Time spent on some pointless coursework meant I wouldn't be outside on the training pitch doing extra work like them other lads were. If my coaches didn't see you outside doing extra bits they would say you weren't hungry enough compared to the guys that were, you know what it's like. Perception is everything. Who is going to get the contract, the lad in the classroom polishing off his theory on anatomy? Or me in the gym working on getting stronger? I knew what the coaches wanted to see! Again we've got to be seen to be doing double what those other boys are doing,

Ben's statement here highlights the pressure he felt to be training more than studying out of fear that his coaches would believe that he had more focus on his career outside of football than making it now. This fear of how he will be perceived once again enables the narrowing of potential career paths and personal development, this is again sensed to be magnified as he alludes to having to do double of what the other boys are doing due to race and again Fanon's belief that the black male must play up to the role his white patriarchy has set for him in order to exist.

## ***5.2 We don't need no education***

With emphasis on sporting excellence being heavy from such an early age, it can be perceived that young black males do not fully understand the necessity of acquiring an education the further they go into their career. With so much emphasis put on being good at sports and

minimal on any other subjects, participants will more than likely refer to their education as a “back-up plan”. This was how the participant described said education as “just a back-up”:

Charlie: The tutor would come in to us once a week and basically take us through a BTEC in Sport. Didn't really have an option of doing anything else that was our only option of what we could study. Guess the importance of it wasn't really drilled in, it was just a college class that we had to do in case football didn't work out, a Plan B.

With the probability of being released extremely high, it is interesting to see that the mentality of the importance of education still did not improve and on further observation, it decreased. In this regard academic or educational achievement is seen as secondary. Charlie's statement here highlights how the early push or being pigeon-holed has altered his mind to believe that the only way to be a success is to focus on an athletic career. The idea that the course was done solely as a plan B shows its perceived lack of importance. This demotes its importance to that which can be seen as somewhat lower than his training. A Plan B is often what is referred to for athletes as a “back-up plan” or contingency plan in case a career in sports fails to materialise. This can be seen to bring around a lack of engagement. A lack of engagement can stem from a lack of variety or choice over what the athlete in question can study. Typically the only course available to study for those at the academy is a BTEC National Diploma in Sport. This course would run concurrent to the players training schedule and takes up minimal time within the week with the majority of clubs giving their players Wednesday afternoon to do the class-based modules. Two participants alluded toward the lack of variety which lead to a lack of engagement with their academic work whilst at the academy:

Dean: I think an option would have been much better because, just because you are a footballer doesn't mean you want to study sport. I think that was the general consensus of it, if you are playing football if you are doing sport you must want to learn sport but there are obviously other interests as well, other places that you may be better in so if it wasn't to work you could still have a better lifestyle for yourself.

Dean's point highlights how again there is a narrowing of opportunities for the youth athlete. Dean describes how he would have liked to have seen some other opportunities for study but was only shown a Sports course. It is similar to how the youth player is pigeon-holed into playing football at school, they are similarly pigeon-holed into the type of learning they must do. Ben describes the course as "something that was prescribed to us." He discusses how due to being a footballer he thought that he just do sport, however on reflection would have liked to do courses in another field:

Ben: I'm sure, if you sit down some of the kids at sixteen and say there is an option of what you can study, you can go and study a BTEC in Music you can do some plumbing or learn a trade, I'm sure there would be more people opting to do those things than the sports science. As the sports science thing, not intentionally, it kind of pigeon holes you if you don't have anyone to tell you something else. You should be able to actually study something you wanted and potentially enjoy.

The lack of control over the course they can undertake negatively affected the engagement on the activity, thus making the participant feel as if it was just a fall back, and not something to help him in later life. This also could lead to minimal effort being put into the work needed to make the qualification criteria.

### ***5.3 Racial Humour as reinforcement of stereotype and perceptions of education***

A common occurrence within the study was the use of banter. It has been said that this is a key phenomenon a black male in a sports dressing room. It is an issue the black male must handle effectively in order to remain. The use of banter is one of the linguistic routines team members use to 'create group solidarity and maintain group cohesion.' (Kuiper, 1991). Racial humour on the other hand however complex in its functionality is, and provides a useful means to assist speakers in their construction and negotiation of identities. An exchange between Dean and a coach brought about how the two constructed and negotiated their identities.

Dean: I sat with my head down and arms crossed as the lads retreated back to the changing room. I wanted my manager to see how much squandering that win meant to me so I held this pose until he saw me. As he came in I proudly said. "We should have won that, that referee robbed us!" I added a few more choice words to highlight my deepest annoyance and frustration and even threw a drink on the floor. His response to that was "Calm down D, don't go try shank him now fam!" He said with a little ghetto twang and winked at me. The changing room erupted in laughter.

This again highlights how the coach marked differences in race by his response. "Shanking" means to stab someone in London colloquialism. Knife crime has been an epidemic that has caused high murder rates within England namely in London. Much of these stabbings have been young black males on other young black males due to a rise in gang culture. By the coach saying this to him, he implies that he is like a member of these gangs who evoke a sense of criminality. This is often discourses sent from the media. The young athlete attempts to showcase emotion after being advised to do so, yet he is referred to as a criminal who is prone to such violence. This can be the coach asserting his position in the group as he belittles the player due to a negative racial stereotype, but this was termed as banter. Humour as a multi-functional discourse strategy that may perform diverse, and sometimes ambiguous and even contradictory functions. It may be used to create solidarity and signal in-group membership, but also as 'a social boundary marker explicitly excluding others.' (Holmes and Marra, 2002). Therefore racial humour may not only be used to signal and reinforce membership in a particular group however it may also highlight differences and mark boundaries between different groups. The so-called "paradox of duality" inherent in humour contributing to both unification and separation further illustrates that humour is indeed a "double-edged sword" (Meyer, 2000:). This may both bond and/ or divide participants as well as audiences. A study on racial humour in sports was conducted by Burdsey (2011) went further to state that in Western sports athletes display and constantly reproduce colourblind ideologies, and racist remarks are often downplayed by the victims and brushed away as being just banter and

jokes. Sue and Golash-Boza (2013) have argued that it is problematic when the racial humour remains unchallenged as this contributes to legitimising racial stereotypes as harmless:

Charlie: The manager stopped me just before I left and asked me where my shirt was. I told him it was in my bag and I was going to take it home and wash it. With a grin he raised his eyebrows looked at me "That's what they all say. I know you lot like to steal!" He nudged me and laughed loud then gave me a hug and said he was only playing. This was in full-sight of the rest of the lads in the changing room who were cackling like hyenas. It was banter I guess, you've got to just take it on the chin. I knew if I got pissed off I would be seen as having a crap attitude. So I just played up to my role.

Black players' resolve in dealing with racist remarks from others will depend upon how the remark is heard and to what extent it becomes naturalized in relation to their consciousness. Black players learn that their compliance is rewarded by not being thrown back to a world in which they have no more privileges than black people outside football, even when white people in the game deny them the power and the capacity to shape the culture of the industry. Frank (1988) describes the silent but powerful pressure to be the 'subservient black man' to appease white men. He reveals the psychological pressures of racism imposed on black players and the performances expected of him in order to get a contract to become part of, but not necessarily integrated into, the white 'football family'. This leads to black players in this period having to develop a performance, a certain socially delimited role, tailored to the fluctuating demands of white coaches and managers.

#### ***5.4 Player/Coach dynamics and intersections of race***

Another theme that emerged from my research was the player/coach dynamic. Within football it has been said that there is an under-representation of black coaches or black males in executive/leadership positions. It is also the case that there remain significant inconsistencies in levels of involvement in playing the game between different ethnic, cultural and religious minorities and a more general under-representation of all minorities as coaches and in leadership positions within the sport. These skewed patterns of minority representation in football have arguably

positioned minorities as 'fit for doing' but not 'fit for organizing' the sport (Bradbury, 2011). A player will typically have a coach overseeing every year of their development from the start of their career which could be as early as the under-8 level until the end of their career which could be retirement depending on how long the athlete's career goes. Players will change coaches annually as they progress through the system, meaning at multiple stages in their career they have to deal with differing characteristics and who controls their career. The earliest experiences with a coach could affect a young child's perception of sport and how they enjoy it. Andre here recalls his first experiences of a football coach.

Andre: When I think back to my first coaches, they were all nice people. They always wanted you to do your best or perform the way that they wanted you to perform. They never got on your back or anything, it was all about encouragement and loving to play and love the ball. My coaches were fine. All my early football coaches were good people. I used to look forward to playing with them.

This highlights how the athlete's relationship with a coach was a positive one and therefore could have further encouraged him to play football from a young age. Therefore, it could be that in this case the positive experience with a coach from an early age could form their belief in taking part in sport would be the most beneficial activity for him. Harnessing the work of Cashmore (1982) presented earlier in the identity construction phase (the negative idea of the black family and depicted the black family being 'unsupportive') is where the first makings of a meaningful early relationship between a player and coach could be established. A rough-hewn psychological explanation would hold that, because second generation Caribbean's and Africans in England are said to predominantly be raised in single-parent families. This was almost true as 5 out of the 7 participants within this study were single-parent raised. It is said the children pass into an emotional void at the ages of thirteen or fourteen and seek out father figures in the shape of sports coaches with whom they form compensatory attachments (Cashmore, 1982). Here we can see how sport systems can compensate for the limitations of black family life. Typically, if a player is bought up

within the setting that Cashmore had earlier alluded to the sport coach overseeing the child's development at the time could form the role of a "father figure." Carrington (2002a, 2002b) used the 'deficit model' of black family life, through comparative studies of black and white pupils and their relationship to school and sport. He concluded that, for black children, sporting achievement compensates for academic failure. Thus, a reason as to why the relationship between and a coach and player may develop. With a coach's main priority being to produce and nurture talent whilst winning matches, a player who sees sport as their only means for achievement would seem like a perfect fit to for this dynamic. Couple this with the emotional attachment or "father-figure" that Carrington spoke of, this makes the player coach dynamic an important phenomenon.

It is also important to investigate the relationship between coaches and players as the athlete goes further into their career. The same participant highlighted his experiences the older he got. This time he describes how he first encountered a perceived difference due to race. It seems this had changed once he got to the academy level. The data also alluded to a change in the way the young player saw the coaches from when they were younger before entering the academy to when they were at the academy. Ben talks about how he started to hear "sly remarks" which he was not used to:

Ben: Coaches can make sly remarks that can be deemed as racial and have a racial intention which sometimes made me feel a bit weary of our relationship. I don't think they were done to hurt or offend, but they were just said. But you have to just leave it because sometimes they don't know what things mean and there's no point acting up over something small. I think sixteen onwards I started to see it in football a lot more than in former years.

Differences of race is perceived to have become more apparent the further the athlete got into his footballing career. Within this statement we can see that 1) the participant can see he is being treated differently to his white counterparts and 2) the introduction of racial remarks. The coaching

field, the changing room and the playing field become stages where subliminal processes and covert relationships are acted out. This can be where a coach and players relationships boundaries and dynamics are formed. These are processes of power dynamics that do not always avail themselves to open scrutiny, as black players struggle for the same kinds of freedoms as white players, simply to be accepted as individuals. It is important for a black man to be subservient in order for him to fit in and be accepted within the football family.

### ***Chapter 5.5 Do what's expected, to be respected***

Corresponding evidence from research in sport psychology suggests that coaches' expectations of their athletes' ethnic background will affect the way coaches choose to instruct and support them (Solomon et al., 1996). This is where another phenomenon called "stacking" could be seen. Stacking is a manner in which such racial hierarchies are manifested on the field of play. Stacking is the 'segregation and designation of athletes to certain positions as a result of assumptions made concerning a link between athletic ability and race.' (Sack, Singh, and Thiel, 2005). This is where another complication with regards to the player coach dynamic can be seen. I refer back to a narrative from my auto-ethnography which highlights how my ethnic background was used by a coach to instruct myself and also the play of the team before a game:

This guy's team talk was all over the place. It was crazy! My old coach gave me this guy's number to go down and play a reserves trial game. Without ever seeing me play before, he told the team to play the ball behind the defence so we could use my speed to get in behind the opposition. "Failing that" he said, "Just play the ball directly into him so he can use his strength and hold the ball up. Literally that's it! They paid decent money, so I played like an absolute battering ram and ran faster than I ever have that game. I think the penny dropped! you must play the role that is expected in order to further your career. That's just football. (Simms, 2015)



This narrative highlighted how that although the manager had never seen the player play before, he assumed the attributes were that of strength and speed, a typical trait for the black footballer. With no instruction reflecting belief on cognitive ability on the pitch, the coach believed he could only use his physical ability to the benefit of the team. This had an effect on the player in questions game. Being on trial at a new club after being released from the academy, the need to play in the way as to which the coach blindly expected of me was paramount for me gaining a place on the team, with first impression being important part of a trial, to go against what a manager has asked from you or expects of you can make your chances getting into the squad difficult. Therefore, a player may feel they have to do whatever they can to impress. This in turn can highlight how the coach could have potentially used his past experiences with other black players as well as what society and the media has reaffirmed to instruct me. Typical discourses in sport detail the black athlete as strong, fast and powerful with minimal cognitive ability. This was often thought throughout time. It has been spoken about quite openly. An example of this was seen in the higher levels of football when Jim Smith, a former football manager of clubs such as Queen's Park Rangers and Newcastle United had said "Black players use very little intelligence; they get by on sheer natural ability." (Smith, 1986). Within this statement two phenomenon's with regards to racial stereotypes can be seen. the first being the ideology that the black player does not have the cognitive ability like their white counterparts and the second being that they are naturally gifted athletes. This was a castoff discourse from Biological Determinism which will be discussed within the Identity Construction theme.

Maguire (1988) research ascertained that evidence supports the contention that blacks are assigned to positions by white managers based on racial stereotypes of abilities. A study done in the USA by Yousef (1989) said coaches match racial stereotypes with position stereotypes, by assigning players of specific races to positions they consider to require characteristics judged to

be dominant in those races. The white ideologies and discourse seen tend to be a prime reason as to why young black athletes chose to play in certain positions.

### ***Chapter 5.6 Experiences of a black academy coach***

As one of the participants in this study now works as a coach, it was important to gather his perspective on life at the academy. More importantly first an idea of how the coach dynamic would be perceived. Jowett (2011) conducted a study on the relationship of black professional footballers and white coaches. Within this study a large number of participants within the study described that an “all black” coach-athlete relationship would be more relaxed, comfortable, open, understanding, and highly communicative (e.g., unrestrained, conversational). None of the participants within my study had a black coach at their academy However Ben (academy coach) discussed the difficulty he encounters being a black coach:

Ben: As a black coach it is difficult, if you try to mentor the young black kids they believe you are being too harsh on them and start to see you in negative light and will never be real with you. You lose that common ground with them, they just see you as an angry black man who's punishing them for every minor infraction. But I know that if I was to try and be their best friend and too soft on them they won't make it. I have been through the system and I know what it's like, me being soft is bad and not setting them up to win. So it's difficult to get the correct balance at times.

Although having similarity of a common ethnic background, the ability to develop a successful relationship all comes down to a whole host of other factors. With the black coach understanding the challenges young black footballers may face, he is better suited to talk of the perils that the youth athletes may face. Understanding how the young black players could be perceived by the white coaches and the extreme difficulty in becoming a footballer, the participant knows that he should show the players tough-love in order to prepare them for the rigours of professional football on the pitch as well as off it. However, this is said to be difficult as the black youth players could see this as a coach being too harsh on them due to having the same colour. This in turn can have

a negative effect on the player-coach relationship, leading to poor performance and player morale.

Ben further states a moment when he was watching a game from the stands and overheard a senior scout and coach talking:

Ben: A frustrated white player is genuinely seen as just frustrated. Whereas if it were a black player it would instantly be him having a bad attitude. I will never forget our striker who was black was annoyed with the lack of service he was getting in the game. His body language was that of someone who was annoyed; hands on hips, flailing of arms when he did not receive the ball he had shouted for. One of the senior coaches who was watching instantly said his attitude was bad and that he won't get far with one like that, which is true! However, in the same game. Our right winger was showing similar frustration himself. He was moping around on the flanks with his hands on his hips, a similar type of body language to the striker, it was a frustrating game. But, the same coach who was watching stated "They are not giving him enough of the ball, no wonder he's a bit pissed!"

The way the senior coach perceived the body language of the two players would influence their potential relationship in the future. The senior coach had already formed an opinion of the black player which was negative, so the relationship could be affected if the player was to move into their senior squad. With a negative opinion being formed, the coach could question the players commitment to the cause, in turn affecting the twos closeness. Jowett and Poczwadowski, (2007) study highlighted potential benefits within the relationship/dynamic by raising ethnic and racial awareness within the coaching community. Such awareness and sensitivity on the part of coaches relative to athletes who come from minority cultural backgrounds may prove advantageous in developing coach-athlete relationships that are both effective and successful.

### **5.7 Perceptions of education post-academy**

A drastic change can be seen in the athlete's perception of education once they left the academy. Attitudes towards education once their scholarship was over saw an increase in its importance. The challenge found here is that it seems that not only does the lack of emphasis on

education make it difficult for the participant to obtain qualifications, but also the qualification in itself was not enough to help with new careers in some cases:

Nyall: Would you say that education that was provided by football, set you in good stead for the rest of your life?

Dean: I don't think we got much out of it at all. It was just like being at school, you learn a subject, but how that subject is moved into the real world, that's where the biggest gap is, you can learn maths but how does it correlate into a job, you can learn English but how does it correlate into a job so it's the same with sport. I was learning sport, learning about the body but what knowledge am I learning from here that's going to get me a job. Obviously everyone talks about being a physiotherapist, but other than that what more are you really going to do and that's where I think I found myself as if you don't want to be a physio what do you do after that.

Dean discusses how he was pigeon-holed into doing sports science and how it can only lead into a career such as physiotherapy. Again, this is similar to the feeling of narrowing opportunities which was alluded to by a participant earlier. It can be said that football lures young athletes in with a promise of riches and success, yet provides nothing for them unless they make it to a certain level. This was an experience like the studies carried out on the collegiate athletes in America. However, this phenomenon cannot be put down solely to race as the course is prescribed to everyone at the academy and not just the black athlete. This is where it would be interesting to ascertain the white youth athletes take on the education provided.

## 6. Being released and starting education again

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In this chapter I will be discussing the phenomenon of being released from the academy. In this section I will discuss the emotions around being released, finding a new identity and career, social support and the transition from being in the academy to returning to “regular” life.

### **6.1 Being released: Process & Experience**

Being released was another theme that occurred regularly throughout interviews. Players were asked to reflect on their experiences of being released and their initial feelings. Such a moment is inevitable in the industry as not everyone who attempts to become a professional footballer can become one. In fact, a very small percentage of players do make it. Only 180 of the 1.5 million players who are playing organised youth football in England at any one time will make it as a Premier League professional which equates to a success rate of 0.012% (The Guardian: Football's biggest issue': the struggle facing boys rejected by academies, 2018) The probability of making it as a professional footballer is extremely low, and the probability of being released is extremely high. Being released by a professional club means that the player in question will not be offered a professional contract after completing their time at the youth team/academy level. This tends to occur in the players' second scholarship year. Typically, being released from a club at this stage spells the end of a career for a young footballer, as it is deemed that they are not good enough to make it to the next stage. It could be more challenging when released at academy level as the released player most likely will have to find a new career swiftly. This is more difficult after dedicating so much time to playing football with minimal financial stability, experience or qualifications. This is said to be a traumatic and in most cases life-changing experience that the majority of aspiring footballers will face. I analyse a response from Charlie:

Charlie: It was awful. That was one of the worst days of my life, literally. If I look back at my life, that is one moment that has etched its way into my memory. It was a horrible day. Before that I had always felt comfortable. When I signed my YTS I knew for the next two years what I would be doing every day, how much money I would be getting and

that if I worked hard I would make my dreams come true. Now everything was gone, my future was up in the air. Worst of all I had no clue what I was going to do next.

Being released is a process that is inevitable within the industry and something that is a necessity within the ever-changing landscape of football. However, the help a player receives after the initial release and the succumbing years after must be monitored and altered. The participant describes the difficulty of having to be told that he would not be offered a professional contract. Charlie describes it as a “horrible day” that is “etched in his memory.” He highlights the uncertainty that he will be facing and describes his future being up in the air. At this stage players can feel a loss of social and cultural capital. A loss of social and cultural capital is also seen when a player is released. Bourdieu (1990) explains that there are three basic forms of a capital: an *economic capital* that can be quickly converted into a monetary form or a property right, a *cultural capital* that can be under certain conditions converted into the economic capital and presented in the form of a professional qualification, and a *social capital* that includes social ties, contacts and relationships.’ He (Bourdieu) first defined the concept as the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition. Bourdieu’s definition makes clear that social capital is decomposable into two elements: first, the social relationship itself that allows individuals to claim access to resources possessed by their associates, and second, the amount and quality of those resources. When being released, the participant will lose access to certain aspects of social capital; this is highlighted here when the participant says:

Charlie: I couldn't cope with it. You come from a Championship Club, pitches are always neat. You train in the morning, you go home, you've got your bredrins, there's a status to the club. When I got released it's like now you're telling me I have to go train at 7pm in January in the winter, its cold. It was weird! Playing on pitches that were awful. Balls getting passed in to you and bobbling up to your neck, I was like, this is long. Why am I here? I thought after you left a top team, you were able to kind of walk into another club. Well that's what they told us, how wrong they were!

The standard of pitch, standard of football being subpar and standard of player was something that was stated. The professionalism of playing was also another factor which was mentioned. Charlie describes losing out on the quality of training pitches and good players that will help him hone his skills. This is a perceived lack of motivation, which in turn could be the reason as to why the participant in question decided not to continue to pursue a career in football. An athlete training within a high-quality setting (i.e. best coaches, training equipment, training program and facilities) an improvement in overall output can be seen. The loss of social capital can also affect cultural capital. Bourdieu (1986) classified cultural capital into three subtypes: - Embodied cultural capital: this type of a capital is linked to the body of an individual, such as education, knowledge, behaviour, and attitude; - Institutionalised cultural capital: this capital is defined by its institutional recognition obtained in the form of academic credentials or qualifications on the basis of an individual's education; and - Objectified cultural capital: this capital is defined as ownership of cultural goods and works of art. Both participants comments reflect on a perceived loss of Embodied cultural capital (i.e. training pitches, top quality coaches, top facilities, loss of doing something they enjoy daily) and institutionalised cultural capital (i.e. professional football contract). When stepping out of such high-quality circles a loss of social and cultural capital can be seen. The loss of these phenomena again can be highlighted when Andre said:

Andre: You've lived a lifestyle, you've been in training every day, and it's not just the lifestyle outside of football. It's literally waking up, putting on a pair of shorts and boots and do what you enjoy every day. I felt like I had a purpose everyday there's no feeling that's going to come that will be better than that.

Here, Andre highlights the loss of doing something that he loved doing daily. This is an important construct in identifying with the athlete's sense of self. Having to train everyday was part of his identity, and so when he can no longer do this, a piece of his identity may feel like is missing. Training everyday provided him with his identity and a sense of belonging as well as a purpose.

## **6.2 Finding me after football**

Another theme was the perceived loss of identity found after being released. The difficulty in the transition begins when the athlete is released from the football industry and is tasked with finding a new career. There is a lack of help aiding players to find new careers and their transition from football to “normal life.” Some of the participants described finding it difficult to deal with the apparent loss of their ‘elite’ status.

Dean: They make it seem like, you’re at this club, this club holds weight and that if you don’t make it here, you can make it somewhere else. They tell you that you can go to university or become something great. But it turns out it didn’t really at the time, if you get released, you get released. And then you’re out here like all the other kids. I am no longer going to be the celebrated star I wanted to be. I won’t be on the back of the newspapers being heralded as the best. It hurt. No one is going to care about me. For a while it felt like no one did.

This is a key element in what helps understand how being released can affect a player. With the black athlete being seen as the only viable option to be deemed as successful, the player talks of how no one will care or he won’t be celebrated and is deemed as a failure. Here is where we can see a lack of self-worth coming from the player. This is where more should be done to highlight future careers in order to allow for the player in question to transition into a new career and feel that he will be deemed as a success. It is important to highlight what success actually is for the athlete in question and then try and show how this can be achieved through other means of work. Black athletes are held in the highest regards within the black community with many black athletes being heralded as the heroes of their race. To have to adapt to a new way of life can be very challenging especially with a heavily constructed identity around football. The player’s initial release from the football club could be deemed as the participant being released into the real world or released back into society. As the participant finds themselves going from the socio-cultural structure that football allowed them to move up into (i.e. middle-class), perhaps back to the socio-cultural status they had once they are released (working-class).



### **6.3 Express yourself**

Another issue a young black athlete could face when they are being released is discussing feelings and expressing their thoughts. Players typically aren't told they won't make it before the day of the decision comes. Coaches tend to keep players in the unknown in order to elicit maximum effort and performance from them. However, the participant speaks of the difficulty in communicating with his coaches. Dean talks about how he was nearing the end of the season and wanted to know whether he would be offered a deal. He lists several reasons as to why he found it difficult to try and speak to his coaches:

Dean: I wanted to ask him what was coming next as I had been feeling down for ages. Every time I thought about football I would get nausea. I did not want to even attend training some days. Leaving my house was hard enough, but how do I ask for help. Part of me felt like I did not want to ask because I would have been told no straight away. Especially if I started saying because I am feeling depressed. They would get rid of me even quicker

This statement highlights difficulty due to his changing mental state and experience of anxiety. He highlights how he felt he could not discuss his mental state with his coach for fear of showing weakness. Wood, Harrison, and Kucharska, (2017) findings supports previous research which suggested that athletes often found it difficult to ask for help. This was said to be down to the perceived stigma associated with doing so. A potential explanation for the apparent reluctance to seek help is that athletes are often discouraged from showing 'psychological, emotional, and physical weakness when competing.' (Sinden, 2010). Thus, it is possible that 'unrealistic and unachievable cultural norms' related to the physical and mental toughness of athletes are potentially internalized. Dean goes on further to state another reason as to why he found it difficult to express himself. He talks about not wanting to go against what they had advised the other players to do with regards to waiting for them to tell him their decision, but due to his anxiety he felt he needed to speak to his coach:

Dean: I decided I would show a bit of passion by saying how much I wanted my deal and how I felt deserving of it. I said that the anxiety of not knowing what's happening was making it difficult for me, but after again getting a Luke-warm response of "Just keep working hard!" I let him know that I did not need advice I needed answers. "That attitude won't

make my decision come quicker, so do as I say!" I decided to just leave the situation before I got angry about the lack of help. That worked against me though. After that my coaches would walk on eggshells around me. I never got a straight answer until I was told that I would not get a contract. Looking back I just looked like the typical "angry black guy" who was crying of a sob story. That is something that I believe we get looked at as whenever you voice an opinion

The participant alludes to being looked at as the angry black guy. Commonly black males can be deemed as volatile and with a perceived lack of respect for authority, the player describes how he was type casted into the stereotype by just expressing his frustration at the situation. However, a simple occurrence as asking a coach for advice or detail on his own situation worked against him. This made him weary of asking for advice again.

#### ***6.4 Social Support through the transition***

A study by Park, Lavallee, and Tod, (2012) highlighted that when athletes have received information from organizations, former teammates, and coaches they were better able to manage their transition This seemed to be lacking with the majority of my participants showing minimal help or guidance was given by the club as they left:

Charlie: You need your club to help and give advice in whichever way they can. It was crazy because this was the stage when I also found out I need and extra six courses to go to University! I couldn't even go straight to University I had to do a foundation course. Stuff like that made me feel like I had just wasted my life or that I was not going to become anything.

Charlie's response underlines how the feelings of wasting their time and feeling abandoned. Athletes have reported a lack of organizational support, leading them to feel used and abandoned as they struggled with their transition. This was not dissimilar from a response given by Charlie. He stated that "once you're let go by a club, that's it They do say they'll look after you but a lot of that is few and far between." Clubs and coaches are seen to almost wash their hands with a player, once they are believed to be unworthy of becoming a professional at the club. With both club and coaches focused only on players at the club, players tend to get a feeling of "used goods" by their

club. With no regard for the future of the athlete in question, there is a perceived lack of self-worth from the athlete and little care from the people at the club, this could be deemed as social support. One of the most consistent findings is the importance of social support during transition, with athletes who feel supported typically finding it easier to adjust to life after sport. More specifically, social support has been referred to as a 'multi-construct' comprising three primary dimensions: (1) a structural dimension that reflects the composition and quality of social support networks; (2) a functional dimension that reflects the social exchanges involved in providing and receiving support, including the type of support that is delivered; and (3) an appraisal dimension that includes assessments of the availability and quality of support (Vaux, 1988). The functional dimension of social support largely concerns support that is received or enacted, such as emotional support (e.g., displays of intimacy or encouragement), informational support (e.g., advice, guidance, and suggestions), esteem support (e.g., strengthen an individual's sense of competence), and tangible support (e.g. financial support). The appraisal dimension of social support concerns what is typically referred to as 'perceived support'; that is, the perception that support is available, regardless of whether that support is sought or received (Barrera, 1986).

## **6.5 Reconstructing alternative forms of identity and developing alternative expressions of capital**

Identity also plays an important role in the process of transition, with evidence suggesting that athletes whose identity is based on participation and success in sport tend to be more 'vulnerable to psychological difficulties, such as depression.' (Lavallee and Robinson, 2007).

Andre: I was able to eventually go to university. I went and done 3 years of Sports Science and graduated. But those 3 years were the hardest times of my life because it was just weird. I didn't feel like I was myself, I didn't really know myself, I didn't really know who I was. I used to be identified as this footballer, now I'm at Uni, my mates are playing in ends, they're playing for teams they're doing what I wanted to do. Yet I am here doing something I never thought I would

A loss of identity is common when someone loses their social capital which in this context relates to being released. The already constructed football heavy identity becomes one that no longer can fit in with their new careers or social setting. After speaking to the participant, it became clear that a lot of them had experienced some sort issue relating to their mental health. No longer being able to identify with the group of people that they had been able to for the duration of their life could lead to mental illnesses such as (anxiety, depression etc).

## **6.6 Transitions from being a footballer to “regular life” and mental well-being**

Mental health encompasses emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how one thinks, feels, and acts. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health issues were perceived to be quite relevant at times of transition from the academy into normal life. Two participants highlighted they encountered depression as well as signs of stress, anxiety, Isolation, failure and depression were all spoken of when athletes were awaiting to know whether they have made it to the professional ranks or not.

Charlie: I wouldn't say it was a state of depression but I wasn't happy with where I was at all. Anything that was going on for me I just felt like everything was in a bad way. So mental state probably wasn't the best, I wouldn't say I was depressed but mental state probably wasn't the best, I wasn't happy at all.

This statement showcases how the participant finds it difficult to express that he was depressed. This denial of depression could be again down to the cultural norm in football where admitting any sign of mental health could be a weakness. He highlights how he was not happy at all and that everything in his life was in a bad way. This is said to be down to the loss of capitals (social & cultural) and the loss of everyday within the sense of self. When discussion of being released arose, players described how they felt isolated in their experiences. Ben describes his feelings of isolation when he was released.

Ben: You hear of so many different players being released that are not making it at certain levels but I felt like at the same time I was the only one going through it. So where the numbers of people being rejected are far higher than people that are actually making it but then to still feel like you are the only one going through this battle or struggle is a bit wired"

The loss of social capital is seen as Ben experiences a loss of his social circle, (i.e. information on relevant topics, network contacts, facilities to be amongst peers etc.) This is evidenced in a study by Park (2013) in which it was said that a consequence of being released or ceasing to play a sport is due to the fact athletes may become lonely and socially isolated. This hindered their ability to adapt to their new life. With a high number of players being released at the same time, being able to identify with others would help alleviate the feelings of helplessness shown once released. Furthermore, athletes' social networks tend to be related to their involvement in sport. Without the shared connection of sport, athletes may quickly lose contact with network members (e.g., coach, teammates), and thus receive little support from them (Lally, 2007). Given this limited availability and quality of support from sporting organizations and social networks within sport, it is perhaps

unsurprising that many athletes turn to family and friends for support during transition. Eric discussed his struggles when he first left the academy. He talks of the way in which his family perceived his mind-state at the time and helped him:

Eric: My parents thought I was depressed for a while. I guess I became a bit more..., I'm a quiet person in general, but I became a bit more insecure. I didn't want to see anyone didn't want to do much I just had my own quiet time. Daily I kept thinking this is what I want to do. This (being released) is not happening. It was frustrating for my parents too, I was turning into something they weren't used to. But they stopped me from really being down about my situation. They showed me who genuinely cared

Kadlick and Flemr (2008) stated that family members and friends often play a crucial role in transition by providing work opportunities, career assistance, and emotional support. This can be seen by how he spoke of how his parents support allowed his mental wellbeing to not worsen. Dean goes on to highlight that having his parents express how they felt to him made him aware of his behaviour and his current state.

Dean: I didn't have the club to tell me, this is how to apply for a job or this is where to go, I was heavily dependent on my parents advising me how to do everything. They done their utmost to give me advice and guidance, but they don't know the advanced stuff. They did not know what my goals were, and they would try to tell me what I should be doing. Eventually their advice got hard to take on board.

This highlights that even though support from family and friends has a positive effect, there is variability in the quality of the support that athletes receive from family and friends. Athletes who have experienced more of a difficult transition to life outside of the academy have reported that their family and friends did not fully understand what they were going through. As a result, athletes found it difficult to turn to them for support or see value in the support that was offered.

## **6.7 Future education & Career Pathways:**

Discrepancies on future career pathways were a common theme within the data. Players study a BTEC National Diploma in Sports concurrent with their training. This qualification once attained can be used towards University. However additional qualifications were needed to be eligible to enrol on a University course.

Andre: I couldn't even go straight to University I had to do a foundation course. I could have done a foundation course in something else that I enjoyed but they forced me to do sports science. I found that course so pointless!

The participant describes how even though he was enrolled on an academic course by the club they did not communicate the qualifications needed for him to pursue other career paths. Similar experiences were seen in the collegiate athlete realm in America. College sports are often heralded as vehicles for racial integration and upward social mobility. Critics have argued that American collegiate sports represent a form of systemic exploitation, perpetuated by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and its member institutions towards Black athletes. This is done by the college in question promising the player an education (Full scholarship/part scholarship) in exchange for their intercollegiate sports participation (Nocero, 2011a, 2011b;). Duderstadt (2003), a former college football player and President of the University of Michigan, noted that even when these students do graduate, there may be claims that the college athlete has been exploited, often citing a degree in a major or discipline with little value. This is a theme parallel to the “meaningless degree” being the BTEC National Diploma for a swap for their effort whilst at the academy. Having such a heavily football structured identity made it difficult for the youth player in question to transition smoothly into their new career. Charlie spoke of his journey and his transition to his new career.

Charlie: There's nothing that is going to fill that void of football, nothing! You had your whole week planned out and had a goal to work towards. When I left I had no structured goals.

It took a while before I realised there are things that I can do to replicate the lifestyle I once had. Like training hard in the gym. I was also playing semi-professionally and going to university. I wasn't slumming it around feeling sorry for myself. But that took me a good few years to get to. Its annoying because if I was shown this earlier it may not have taken me so long or been so emotionally draining to get to where I am now

Charlie's described lack of structure prevented him finding a new club and/or career. This bears similarity to the earlier findings which shows that without and organisational help, the transition is perceived to be more difficult. He highlights the length of time that it took him to settle down and be happy with his life after he realised what his options where. A solid proposal would be for future career options to be relayed to the players to aid their transition.

## 7. Reflections

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### **7.1. Key findings:**

#### **7.1.1: Early Identity construction:**

My thesis aimed to highlight the key role football plays in constructing the identity of young black males from an early age. From what has been produced here, construction begins with being pigeon-holed into sport by the educational system. Once a young black male is identified to be talented at sport by the faculty, they are pushed towards having a vested interest in P.E. This signifies the earliest belief that they could indeed become a professional sportsman. With the belief of pursuing a career in sports, effort and standards were seen to decrease in other academic areas in order to focus their efforts and engagement to sport (P.E. in school). This is where a shift from academic engagement is now seen put towards sporting excellence. Gratification and praise being received readily for their sporting prowess develops a need to further one's reputation as an elite sportsman. This is done by continuously performing at a high standard that is expected of them. This was done during P.E. or for their respected junior sports team, or in this study football. Minimal engagement was seen towards other academic subjects, thus resulting in a decline in academic achievement except for P.E. Another reason why the young black male was perhaps



more engaged with P.E. in school is down to a colonised syllabus being taught. The educational system was said to have highlighted many black athletes as heroes or role models within their syllabus and this further heightened the black youth athlete's belief of becoming a professional sportsman due to the images reproduced in their studies. Participants spoke of seeing images the likes of Isaac Newton, Albert Einstein and William Shakespeare in subjects such as Maths, Science and English. These were examples of the successful males within their field with which participants spoke of having minimal in common with; race being a predominant feature to this matter. Racial similarities within the images portrayed their P.E. syllabus were athletes such as Ronaldinho, Thierry Henry, Michael Jordan, LeBron James. Those mentioned are deemed as role models and sports idols black males could aspire to. In turn the young black male uses these 'sports heroes' as blueprints for their own success. These similar discourses are provided throughout the media. The media is said to perpetuate constant narratives of black athlete's transcending their socio-economic setting through sporting performance. This line of thinking decreases the importance of education as the participants felt they could relate to the sports stars they were taught about in their P.E. class and not those in other academic subjects.

### ***7.1.2 Thoughts on education at the academy***

In most cases the importance of education was rarely emphasised to the young player during their time in school once they were identified as talented in sport. Education since then was referred to as a "Plan B" by players and coaches as they entered the academy. This notion of "Plan B" relegates the importance of education to the youth athlete and further enhances the focus on achieving success in sport (now football). This occurrence again subconsciously reaffirms the notion that the black male's only chance of being successful in life is to be a professional sportsman. Players are provided with a BTEC National Diploma alongside their training whilst at the academy, however the participants within the study detailed the education provided to be uninspiring and of no benefit for their career outside of football. They spoke of being disengaged with studies whilst playing football. The lack of engagement meant that education whilst at the academy to most participants was done purely to maintain eligibility for team selection. The new emphasis on training and sports performance required a need to sacrifice personal/academic

development to keep in line with the expectations of their coach/manager. The cause being the new training regime when joining the academy now has an even greater emphasis on sporting performance. This was due to the frequency of training increasing. With such emphasis on training, players felt intimidated to be seen to show interest in other activities/subjects out of fear of not putting full commitment into their training. The participants believed that if they asked about careers in other industries or how they could apply for courses, jobs or university they would be seen to be admitting that they do not have the self-belief to become a footballer.

### ***7.1.3 Experience around race within the academy***

Racial humour disguised as banter was a regular occurrence within the academy and the most spoken about issue regarding race. It was open to see that the black athlete must accept racial banter in the way that their white counterparts wanted them to in order for them to remain in favour with the coach and ultimately a chance to earn a professional contract. With sport being a predominantly white male dominated area, the black male will commonly be the one having to accept racial humour that can be seen to be harmful. How the black male deals with such banter influences their standing within the team. Within the study, the participants made it apparent that they could not be open with their coaches or express their feelings towards such phenomenon as it could cause them to fall "out of favour." If the coach had a negative view on the player it is believed the chances of the player being offered a contract would be low. The coach has a high status within his environment (the dressing room) therefore it is important to show his hierarchical status. This tended to be done in the form of racial banter or humour from this study. Racial humour is believed to be used to distinguish differences and maintain hierarchy. It is also a tool that can be used to galvanise a team and boost cohesion. Participant's described the difficulty in accepting some forms of banter but knew that how they dealt with the matter in the eyes of their white colleagues and coaches was key to their career. What they had worked so hard to achieve would be taken from them if they were seen to feed into the already over used notion of a black player having a "Chip on his shoulder!" This notion is used when a black player behaves in a way unwanted by their coaches and is a label that will stick with a player as reason as to why he may not get a professional contract at the club. At a young stage of their overall development it is difficult

for the participant to understand the negative aspects of racial banter as it is so normalised with football, therefore the player is forced to accept it even though it may cause some harm to him.

Participants also spoke of the need to work twice as hard as their white counterparts. This was a regular thought process within the study. It was described how as a black player they must to give the coaches “1000 reasons to give you a contract, but how coaches only need 1 reason to not.” This type of ideology that is used by the black male causes them to dedicate all energies, efforts and engagement to the pursuit of professional football. Players then felt that minimal time could be spent away from doing extra training to be better than their white counterparts in order to make it. This makes it easy to see why players would forsake putting effort into academic success whilst at the academy in pursuit of sporting excellence.

#### ***7.1.4 Transition from release***

The study showed a degree of difficulty in the player's transition from football academy scholar, to full-time employment/education. The loss of their everyday purpose meant that routine and a sense of belonging decreased. This coincided with a loss of social and cultural capital. When these types of capital are lost it is very difficult for the player in question to continue in football and they may have to seek alternative careers. However, with minimal qualifications or advice on how or what to do next, the transition became a long and difficult process. This is down to a lack of information available to the players to see other potential career options whilst playing. This was a common issue felt by those within the study upon their release. Some participants likened themselves to “used goods” and were given no support in their transition to another industry by their club. Coping mechanisms relayed to stress and pressure management within the participants were only based upon the rigours of football and not for other issues that may come up within their new fields this again is where some issues with regards to mental health came up. Showing vulnerability or asking for help was often deemed as a sign of weakness and an emotion not easily conveyed in what is a masculine environment. With the black male athlete being perceived as hyper-masculine, it was difficult for the youth athlete to exhibit vulnerability for fear of going against the expectations of their coaches and peers. This line of thinking was prevalent in the participants

within this study and brought about complications with regards to mental health. Symptoms seen were; diminished self-worth, depression and anxiety.

Interestingly, players found they were happier when they began their new careers and were shown different aspects of life which were not shown to them whilst they were playing football. Participants spoke of being in new careers enabling them to forge new identities as being a relief as they can finally be free to express themselves, outside of the constraints of how they believed they had to behave to fit the role of a black footballer.

## ***7.2 What can be done about the racialized experiences in a football academy?***

Whilst at the academy, players and coaches must be aware of how some racial humour can serve to be destructive. As racial humour is a double-edged sword and serves to help build rapport and cohesion, it is entirely possible to limit its occurrence. By stating how racial banter can be received, awareness of what can and will be said will lead those who are about to say it to think consciously before coming out with any statements. Race should not be a way to reassert differences within a group as this can be harmful. This idea can work in all general senses and reiterates how players and coaches can and will be perceived by others. With coaches and teachers being such important figures in the development of young black athletes, it is imperative that all parties are aware of the ways in which they are reinforcing pigeon-holing or stacking at such an impressionable age. Judge each player on a case by case basis and not through stereotypical discourse.

## ***7.3 How can education be re-imagined and reinforced***

In order to reinforce education into these young men's life, there must be a way to widen career awareness from a young age and to also remind the young athlete's that there is an opportunity to do other careers. Football is certain to be these young males' main priority as this is something they enjoy and receive a great deal of recognition and gratification for. However, in order to prevent the narrowing down of career pathways, there is a need to push them to replicate their sporting achievement in their academic performance. Though supporting young children by highlighting their strengths and putting them in a position to have a sense of belonging such as

joining a sporting institution is beneficial to their overall development, it must be known that the young child should also have other avenues or subjects shown to him. Football is said to instil discipline, organisation and keeps the players in peak physical condition. Data within this study has shown that this same work ethic can be transferred into other aspects of life (i.e. time management, resilience, structure, goal planning etc). Without being exposed to other careers and subjects which carry importance for future endeavours, they will still believe sporting achievement is their only option for success. In order to keep education important there is a need to broaden the choices of options regarding courses to undertake and the type of qualifications to receive. I reference the Scholar Baller paradigm from the USA studies shown that when the player put similar efforts to ad-hoc courses outside of sport the rate of achievement in the course/activity they were partaking in was shown to have increased. Therefore, it is important to Increase the emphasis and importance of gaining a qualification in the players chosen field and to gain a better understanding of the market within other careers.

#### ***7.4 How can we enable a better transition away from football?***

More needs to be done at all levels to highlight potential career options if football does not provide these young males with a livelihood. Courses outside of sport (i.e. Accountancy, Media, Carpentry, Sociology etc.) as well as regular careers advisory services should be offered. The Professional Football Association have done well in partnering with accredited training providers and offer their members a reduced fee to enrol on courses of their choosing. Courses range from Personal Training, Yoga Instruction, Coaching and physiotherapy. However, there is seen a lack of courses outside the realm of sport or fitness that a player can do. Players must be encouraged to pursue activities outside of sport and this is a principal that should be followed before life at the academy, during life at the academy and after life at the academy. Educating the players on the importance of self-development whilst doing these courses is key so they can see there is a result to partaking in these courses. Also coaches and managers should be educated on the benefits of the players doing these courses. It is essential that coaches and managers do not assume a players' desire to become a professional is low if they are seen to be focusing effort into academic achievement. Players should have no inhibitions about pursuing other career goals whilst at the academy under the gaze of coaches without fear of how their efforts towards such endeavours will

be received. Furthermore, players should be encouraged by coaches and those higher up in their pursuits of other subjects/activities. Being able to reflect and identify on my personal experiences from my auto-ethnography allowed me to see I had encountered some mental health issues whilst at the academy. This allowed me to identify with my participants and their prevalent mental health issues. Being able to engage and express feelings with regards to some experiences the player may have had at the time was beneficial. It is key to be aware of the symptoms of mental health so that if they are experiencing them, they can discuss the problem with a local GP etc to receive the relevant assistance before these manifests into greater problems. It is typical for the athlete to internalise some feelings in such a masculine industry. To be strong and silent can be seen to be a noble trait within football, however this only is a destructive notion of thinking especially when coupled with a weak non-athletic identity. With no outlet or no idea of self, the player grows deeper into their mental wellbeing issue.

### ***7.5 What was a good study?***

As I conclude my study, I refer to my judgement criteria and can say I have used the majority of elements to enable for a good coherent study. My standing within certain footballing circles allowed me to capture data at impromptu times. This emancipated my data collection as it was not limited solely to my organised semi-structured interview. This gave my data collection exceptional width. This level of dynamism allowed me to record rich and unfiltered data regularly. This allowed for a fair representation of what is currently happening and current feelings. Participants were not restricted to answering questions on race, therefore the responses with regards to race were raised without myself initiating the dialogue. Without my line of questions being used at times I uncovered responses from black footballers in their natural settings that were important pieces of data for my study. This was perfect for my ethnographic research approach. The width of this data tended to come from the footballer talking about racial issues in a setting the footballer felt comfortable in. As I caught evidence like this, I believe it allows the reader to make their own judgement on what was said as I had minimal influence on the response that the participant had given. My standing within football, as well as past experiences gave myself the ability to be immersed in my study. The use of a reflexive approach to uncover authentic data due

to status within sample group was key to this study. I built great rapport with the gatekeepers and participants alike. This allowed me access to a well-resourced group of participants and was able to have a pick of participants that wanted to help me with my project. Participants saw the therapeutic benefits of speaking about past issues and therefore were open about their experiences as they felt they were receiving help from talking about these issues. At times the interviews felt like a counsellor-therapist relationship. This evoked a great deal of passion from all participants, therefore the quality of the narratives that were told were excellent for my study as it brought about a real richness and authenticity to issues being brought up. My empathy around situations due to my embodied experiences within football I believe allowed all participants to feel at ease when talking to me. It became abundantly clear that players had previously felt uncomfortable talking about some issues with non-black researchers, my compassion allowed them to work with me as I understood the difficulty it took to open up to people unknown to them so quickly. This was because I myself had been interviewed on my experiences by a non-black researcher. Interestingly as I conducted more research and grew a deeper rapport and relationship with gatekeepers and participants, I gathered a feeling that some participants felt obliged to help me and felt comfortable discussing issues as they knew that they were helping my study which in turn will be helping other young black footballers who may encounter similar experiences. I was given ample amounts of data from these interactions which definitely uncovered the experiences, feelings and thoughts of those in question. I tried my utmost to not mention race throughout the study but naturally come to a point where the reader could understand that the occurrences experienced by participants were due to race.

I was able to immerse myself within all settings and get an embodied feel of my participant's thoughts in their natural settings due to again my standing within football. Participants felt relaxed because of who I was and my experiences and why I am doing said study. I aim for my study to be picked up by all levels of reader and to make sense whenever the reader wanted to ascertain information on the phenomena, they had interest within. My reflexive standpoint was paramount to the success of this study.

## ***7.6 limitations of study***

The limitations for my study were that a greater sample size to collect my data from. Limited to experiences of those only in London meant my gatekeeper and my subjects were solely London based for their academy time. The ability to have more narratives from those outside of London would be something that further research must incorporate. Also, the academies of the participants I interviewed were no higher than the Championship level. This is still a very high and competitive level however it would be valuable to gather data from players in the Premier League and all the way to the League 2 academies. Previous research conducted by myself took on an auto-ethnographic approach and so when it came to interviewing, I was a neophyte. With more practice and experience I believe the quality of question I would produce may lead to better answers. I also believe more time is needed to be engaged with participants within their natural setting. I was restricted to a maximum of two hours with each participant and could see that the longer the interview went on, the more candid the participants stories were. Participants would call me after interviews and ask if I needed any more narratives or if we could talk about some issues again. This shows me that more time engaged with the participant perhaps would illicit even richer forms of data. Even though my reflexive approach was beneficial at times, participants assumed I knew what they were talking about on some issues without real explanation. This lead too many answers being deprived of key explanations on how race played a part in some occurrences. This could lead the reader to not understand some issues. With myself not wanting to relay every question back to race, at times some issues which were seen to be racial was not explained by the participant in greater detail.

## ***7.7 Concluding Personal Narrative***

My findings throughout the research, as did within my undergraduate thesis, caused endless reflection on my past experiences not just within football but also in education. Sport evidently is a site where the black male heavily identifies, and this was true with me. My earliest memories of school were sporting ones. I recall the assemblies where your latest goal haul that week would be mentioned, the daily lunch-time playground matches which afforded you your status that day within your year. The trophies, certificates and accolades I own and still show on my mantel piece were all acquired from football or P.E. As I reminisce, my thoughts and feelings on



other subjects and activities were all laced with boredom, restlessness and disengagement. Sport in an educational sense at school was the perfect vehicle to bring a focus and a drive to an energetic child such as myself. P.E and later on sport can be seen to instil a sense of belonging to a group, a sense purpose and an outlet for my endless supply of energy to be exerted. Sport instilled discipline, organisation, ambition and focus within me and it is difficult to see how any other academic subject would have done that. However, as it was not coupled with a reinforcing of an importance of endeavours that may be outside the realm of a professional athlete, I wasted a good deal of time stuck in a constructed identity which would not allow me to unlock my full potential. This was purely down to having minimal knowledge on anything else to do or belief in becoming anything else other than an athlete. I love sports and physical activity. Every qualification I own is sport, P.E. or fitness based, therefore my embodied experiences have served me well. Seeing no other alternatives for a career I could relate to or want mixed with the success stories of young black males in sport forced me to disregard education. I dreamt to be the chosen one, the one everyone is amazed by and holds in such high regards. But all these things that can be achieved without becoming a “sports hero.” I dedicated my every energy into becoming the best sportsman in school and potentially a footballer. For my masters I demanded I put the same belief and drive into my research masters. I applied the same thought process of having to work doubly harder than my non-black counterparts to make it in football into my work. The same thinking that caused me to go the extra mile in my attempts make it within football and to be a top sportsman in school, I went an applied to this thesis. It can be said football did construct my identity in a good way as without football, I would not be conducting this research. The desire to do my masters was born off the back of my experiences writing my auto-ethnography. The therapeutic benefits I felt reflecting and analysing my own experiences at that stage lead me to conduct further research. I hope that having the participants in this study reflect similar to myself will bring the therapeutic benefits. I developed a sense of self conducting this and can only hope the same will be done for them. The habitus of a black male footballer within myself is now translated from football to my academic pursuits just how it should have twenty years ago.

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## 9. Appendix

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### **9.1 Interview Transcript**

Nyall: Could you tell me about your earliest experiences, thoughts and memories within football?

Eric: My earliest memory in football as someone who played or as my earliest memory?

Nyall: Your earliest, even as a little kid, first ever memory.

Eric: My earliest memory of football was, I never really played football very young. Actually, I'm trying to figure out when that age was. My first couple memories was growing up in Brixton and playing at Ferndale or Brixton Rec. That and another one that sticks out was when I was probably like four, the older boys at school would play but I used to do gymnastics, this is mad, I used to do gymnastics and half way through gymnastics they'd go outside and play in a mad area of Crystal place but you couldn't see them just hear them. And then one day I poked my head out and was like wow what's this game they're playing? Yea that's my earliest memory of football it wasn't playing memory it was one of intrigue, what is this, what is this game about.

Nyall: So what made you start playing if you can remember that?

- Eric: I think it was the sport that you do. Coming up in London where you're from everyone plays football so it seems like the sport that you take up and because everyone is doing it, it's the one where you can make friends so like He plays, I like what he's doing, let me play. It was all for fun really, you played football for fun so that's why I did it.
- Nyall: So what were your earliest experiences with the coach and the people who ran the football you were in as well?
- Eric: You know what's funny, when I think back to my first coaches, they were all nice people. They always wanted you to do your best or perform the way that they wanted you to perform. They never got on your back or anything, it was all about encouragement and loving to play and love the ball. My coaches were fine my early football coaches all my coaches were good people.
- Nyall: Okay good, and I want to just touch on you had your scholarship whilst you were at Crystal Palace from the time of your earliest memory and the time you earnt your scholarship experiences and memories from playing during that time?
- Eric: Football for me was always positive. I never had, up until that time, so my earliest memory till being sixteen, football was always a joyous thing. Number one because I enjoyed playing it and number two, because I was good at it and getting good at it. I never had a bad moment it was one thing I always looked forward to doing whether it was in a weekday at school at weekend in my district or whatever, even playing at Palace and stuff, it was always something I looked forward to.
- Nyall: Could you tell me any differences from when you were playing, before you became a scholar, to when you became a scholar what were the differences?
- Eric: Football becomes a fulltime profession at sixteen years old. It's no longer a... it's fun, but there is a load more pressure added too. For one, a business and a results business at that. So everything that you feel you're now stepping into, has a knock on effect on how you may be perceived later on down the line and getting in to Pros. It was a mans world and it changed a lot. That positivity that you had can turn in a day, I should say through that time it's a development process as well but just shows how that changed a lot. You go in day to day and it's a mans world and you have to become a man very quickly at sixteen years old, you have to learn you can't act that way you was acting before and it's still a joyous thing but it had added pressures that you never knew existed.
- Nyall: And with those pressures, do you believe that you were given the right knowledge or education about the change from youth to scholar?
- Eric: You get told this is a place where two percent of the team that you came in with when you were thirteen would become professional footballers, you were always told that you've got to be that two percent, on your first day you're told out of that squad that you're in, not many of you would become footballers. But I think that's told to you to number one, not scare you, but to put the frighteners in you so you do go out and achieve but at the same time not a lot of you aren't going to make it because of the pressures. I don't think they warn you there's not a lot of warning about the pressures you face around what you do, I don't think there's enough education around how to accept a loss or how do you recalibrate yourself after having not played for three, five, six months sat on the bench if you're injured. When you play and you haven't played for long there's no warning what those pressures are and how to combat those pressures if they should ever come as a young player. There wasn't for me anyway.
- Nyall: Do you believe that the education that you received from the club in terms of academically and personally, do you believe that it was enough to support you through your life?



- Eric: No. No, I don't think anything I learnt from someone teaching me at football helped me later on in life. I think everything I learnt from football was a process of things happening to me and I having to cope with those situations. I don't think there was any help given during those times. I don't think I learnt anything that would help me.
- Nyall: What I really want to do, I want to touch upon education or miseducation as it were. In terms of your academic education, how was that set out to you from the club when you started your scholarship?
- Eric: We were told we would be educated and go to college and would do that every Wednesday for the two years that you're on scholarship and you'd learn or we'd go to a study support centre and we'd do a BTEC in sport science.
- Nyall: Is that something that you wanted to do, that BTEC in sports science?
- Eric: I think I was something that was prescribed to us, it wasn't anything that I wanted to do. I just wanted to play football at that current moment in time but I don't think at sixteen your ready to make that decision so to speak. I know at the same time you're choosing A Levels, but you're still open to things later on in life. So you could choose, Maths, English and History and still not know what you want to do even after you left university that's just a passage. But as a young footballer, you know you want to play football so you think, sport's science makes sense because you want to play football. But I'm sure, if you sit down some of the kids at sixteen and say there is an option here, you can go and study a BTEC in music you can do some plumbing or learn a trade, I'm sure there would be more people opting to do those things than the sports science. As the sports science thing, not intentionally, it kind of pigeon holes you if you don't have anyone to tell you something else and it make a decision for you moving forward should you not get a pro. But if you were to learn something else, although that may pigeon hole you, you can actually study something you wanted and enjoy. So coming back to my original point, the sports science course was definitely prescribed onto you and not something you just wanted to do.
- Nyall: Do you wish you were given more information about what you could do outside of football at the time or do you believe you had enough knowledge or is it something you had to learn.
- Eric: More could have been done one hundred percent, being the person that I was and being a bit more intelligent, I still am [chuckles], at the time I did quite well in my GCSEs so I knew that stuff but I say there is a need for more education.
- Nyall: At any time whilst you were a playing football, obviously you are coming to your formative years and your finding yourself a bit more, do you believe your race ever hindered any opportunities or you were treated different at the time?
- Eric: At a young age, sixteen, or coming up?
- Nyall: Start with coming up to sixteen how did you perceive your race then, and then after.
- Eric: There were black youths and white youths but I didn't really see myself in football as they're treating me different because I'm black at sixteen and then when I got to youth team then I'm thinking, I can see there's a certain issue with race when it comes to some people might be favoured or some people like black boys might have a harder time white kids might have had favourites from the coaches and stuff. Coaches can make sly remarks than can be deemed as racial and have a racial intention and I think sixteen onwards started to see in in football a lot more than former years.
- Nyall: And you know, did you ever feel you were treated differently because of your race in football?

- Eric: Err, Yeah. Tonnes of times. I think you feel like you are treated different sometimes especially from members of authority. You tend not to be treated under the racial... things from your teammates. Like I remember it was our day off and we all had to meet at a local leisure centre for some swimming as a bit of cardio and to limit impact injuries. I said I hated swimming, which I did and still do, guess it is because I couldn't swim! Then one of the lads said "yeah black guys can't swim because of all the fast twitch muscles in your body which makes you fast are also extremely heavy." He did not say it as banter, he genuinely believed it. What was hilarious was that the other 4 black players in the team, like myself could not swim either. For a long time that was what I believed though and I hid behind it at all time. I can't swim like Michael Phelps but I can run like Usain Bolt. I will take that! Obviously the older you get the more you realise that's a load of rubbish. but from there I realised that they see my traits as completely different due to race
- Nyall: Do you feel like you ever had to play up to the role that they thought you were like the typical stereotypes that come with being a young black footballer, do you believe you had to play up to any of those types fit in and not rock the boat?
- Eric: Potentially not to rock the boat, you had to fit in or to please my coach. My coach wanted me to be big, strong, fast. To be honest if you look at it, you can't say that's racial, I know now that potentially could have been his idea of "Oh yeah, this guy is black so he's big, strong, fast" kind of thing.
- Nyall: Do you believe your race effected your standing within the team positive or negative...
- Eric: So yes Positively or negatively, conforming to or not so times when I conformed or made sure I wasn't living up to stereotype, where black people are known for having attitude or whatever, I know I can't do that or I'm not going to do that etc.
- Nyall: So I want to touch upon the time when you were going to leave the academy, you've gone through your scholarship years and the education. What was it like when you were told you were not going to be given the professional contract?
- Eric: It was awful. That was one of the worst days of my life, literally. If I look back at my life, that is one moment that has etched its way into my memory. It was a horrible day. My parents thought I was depressed for a while. I guess I became a bit more, I'm a quiet person in general, but I became a bit more, insecure I didn't want to see anyone didn't want to do much I just had my own quiet time like this is what I want to do this is not happening. It was frustrating for my parents too, I was changing into something they weren't used to. But they stopped me from really being down about my situation.
- Nyall: During this whole period of time, how were you treated in football by those, you've obviously been told you're not getting the professional contract, what was the information that was provided in regards to your next steps in regard to your career in football, outside of football?
- Eric: Career in football you're told you can go to exit trials or we'll help you find clubs and stuff. Luckily for me I didn't do too badly in the BTEC but other people, I don't think there was much direction in terms of education. I think once you're let go by a club, you're let go by a club. They do say they'll look after you but a lot of that is few and far between.
- Nyall: Can you tell me about the journey on how you got to where you are now. So you've been released by the academy at this time, your journey from football to outside of football and university, can you tell me of your path.
- Eric: So straight after, I was sent to a few clubs to trial from Palace but nothing really materialised and after those two they stopped sending me to clubs. Then I went to a few clubs after through an agent and did alright but it just felt a little bit weird and my agent stopped sending me to clubs, well decent clubs, he was sending me to Nottingham and Ryman

league and I fell out of love, I didn't really have the same drive like I did, I felt. No one really prepared me for, you know when you get relieved from a club you'll just be out here playing games and you're going to end up playing this place and it's going to be shit, it's going to be horrible.

Nyall: What were your emotions at the time having to come to terms with that you're going to be at crystal palace.

Eric: I couldn't cope with it. You come from a Crystal Palace Championship Club, pitches are always neat. You train in the morning, you go home, you've got your bredrin's, there's a status to Crystal Palace, and then you're telling me I have to go train at 7 o'clock in January in the winter, it's cold. It was just weird and playing on pitches that were awful. Balls getting passed in to you and bobbing on your neck, I was like, this is long. Why am I..., I thought after you left Palace, you were able to kind of walk into another club. Because that they make it seem like, You're at Crystal Palace, this club holds weight but it turns out it didn't really at the time, if you get released, you get released. And then you're out here like all the other kids. So I decided to not continue playing there but to find a club and go to university and luckily because I did so well on the BTEC, I was able to go to a very good university and I went there and did 3 years of Sports Science and graduated. But those 3 years was the hardest moments of my life because it was just weird. I didn't feel like I was myself, I didn't really know myself, I didn't really know who I was. I used to be identified as this footballer, now I'm at Uni, my bredrin is playing in ends, they're playing for teams they're doing what I wanted to do.

Nyall: So when you say, you identified as a footballer, can you describe to me what that identity meant. How you believed that identity looked to everyone else?

Eric: The way I thought footballers were viewed by general public, I thought everyone thought you were sick and he's a footballer, do you know what that means. He must have the coolest clothes, drive the sickest car, he must talk to bare girls and there was a certain sauce that came with being a footballer or being branded as a footballer and I think as well, everyone wanted to be one. I was finally living out that dream of mine to become one. Something that all my friends wanted to be at school and I was one of the guys. There's an air of confidence about you as everybody knows you as a footballer and for that identity to just leave you. That was who you were that identity wherever you went. Do you know Kenlock, the footballer, he plays for palace. The identity was more important you knew who you were and you knew where you stood amongst people, amongst your peers, amongst other people as well, you just knew your, I wouldn't say social rank but you just knew your place in society.

Nyall: Do you ever believe you could have had a career in football, why do you believe that you're not in football anymore. You've gone to university you've got yourself heavily qualified, you've gotten a good experience of football after having played for so long, what drove you away from being involved in the football industry?

Eric: I knew I could have been a footballer, I was always told sometimes when I'm actually looking at myself I think, I used to play football. I fell like the system, the football system that is here now, that messed with me as I feel it's so hard to get ahead especially after coming out of playing at an academy, I couldn't be bothered to be dealing with the hypocrisy and the systemic racism. All of the stuff you thought shouldn't really exist is football anymore. But it definitely did. I got tired of it, I got tired of having to button my lip when I had a question or not being able to have my own opinion on things because it's not the way that a coach saw it. I've grown to know, actually when you're a man and living in this world, it's okay to have an opinion. It's okay to question something especially if you don't believe it in yourself.

- Nyall: Do you believe that the degree of success you've had outside of football in what your doing now. Do you believe that could have been done within the football industry? The way you almost feel free and able to express yourself?
- Eric: No, I think certain people get that privilege and it's not certain people in terms of a race thing, I feel like, the people that have been at clubs for years and years and are captains or leaders amongst them you have to earn the right to have an opinion in football. You have to earn the right to have the bollocks to challenge somebody when they are wrong especially people that are higher up. As it's very easy to see one person and say something and them to say it another manager and then another and then all of a sudden you're black balled. I think you have to work very hard to have your own say, your own voice in football.
- Nyall: Do you believe that could be a reason there is a lack of black people in the higher executive positions in football?
- Eric: One hundred percent. That whole ability to talk up, that's not just do with the lack of black managers and execs, I think the reason for that, is that we don't get that close to having that leadership. Only a handful of black players have been made captains and been looked at as this is the guy you need to listen to. Thierry Henry, Patrick Viera, Ian wright now. These are players that had to earn their platform even to be considered respected. I feel it's very easy to give that to white players and then they feel confident enough where they say "because I've been so close to the manager, I feel empowered to go and do my badges and become that". Even when black players potentially do want to become coaches. There's always that "I don't know whether he'll be able to do the job", He always has to work twice if not five times as hard as someone in his same position and get that respect amongst his peers.
- Nyall: The same experiences you had in the football industry, trying to make your career, did you feel you had the same type of experiences whilst outside of football, the workplace was it similar?
- Eric: Yes and No, I feel I can speak up on what I believe in and I work in a place where they encourage that and also everyone has to have their opinion. At the same time there are still the same demons at work [laughter]. You still come across the same thing at work, you get people trying to block you, you get people that stop you from getting where you want to get to however but now because in the nine to five or the creative industry I work in, it's okay to have an opinion and no one's going to look at you and say "you can't say that to the boss" but I don't agree with him.. but if you did that in football, that's the boss and the bosses word goes and he can go up to one of his bosses and that's how the word goes around. So I don't think there's a culture being able to challenge someone in football compared to say a nine to five.
- Nyall: Do you believe you couldn't challenge anyone in football because of your race or because that's just the normal thing in football?
- Eric: I think as a young footballer you don't try but the fact I was black added extra pressure as you shouldn't be challenging to anyone as you might come across as insubordinate or rude or someone that doesn't listen and you could become trouble, so I think there is a little bit of a difference.
- Nyall: Looking back would you have liked to have got any type of job in football, be it coaching, be it upstairs in media was there ever that opportunity to do that?
- Eric: Not really, the clubs don't give you an opportunity to go into clubs and then learn about what's happening in the club and get into those types of things. If I knew you could do media, I would have probably gone into media, worked with players and made social stuff,

whatever it was I probably would have gone into that stuff. There was never any direction when it came to that.

Nyall: Do you wish you given the information at the club so you could do your job at the club as opposed to having to go away from football and find it. Would you have preferred to have done your career in football or you happy with it outside of football?

Eric: Knowing what I know now, I'm so happy it's not in football as I can...I still work within football. If I had done it that way I would have just been working in football and not known anything else. There's a world outside of football. That's one of the things I carry with myself now, knowing there's a whole world outside of football. Football isn't everything.

## **Question Bank 9.2**

### **Question bank**

Could you tell me about your early experiences/thoughts/memories in football? (Grassroots – U16)?

- *How did you start playing football*
- *What made you start and what made you keep playing*
- *How were you treated by your coaches, peers, family etc.*

When you earnt your scholarship, what were you told in terms of your career progression?

- *What was your explained route into the first team/obtaining a professional contract*
- *Alternative routes (i.e. careers outside of football, after you finished playing, if you did not achieve your professional contract, other careers in football)*

What were the changes you experienced when you went from a youth player to a scholar?

- *Your day-to-day life*
- *How were you treated by your peers, coaches, family etc.*

Could you tell me more about your education in football?

- *Academic education*
- *Personal education*

Could you describe your experiences to me when you had to leave football, how were you treated by those within football on your exit?

- *What type of support if any were you given by your club, coaches, peers*

Describe to me your experiences when finding another career outside of football?

- *Application & Interview processes*
- *Support given by those around you*
- *Any difficulties in finding a new career, and any jobs outside of football*
- *How did the process make you feel*

Can you describe the transition from football to full-time employment/education

- *How were you treated by your peers, family, new colleagues*
- *Describe your feelings whilst in the transition*

Did or do you feel the education and skills you learnt whilst in football helped you with your new career.

- *Academic skills, life skills*

Is there any information or advice you would wanted to know and learnt whilst a scholar that you were not given.

- *Non-footballing skills*
- *Academic and life skills*

Do you feel that your race had an effect on your education and the way you were treated by those around you in football?

- *How did you your experiences differ to your white counterparts*

### ***9.3 Participant Information Sheet***



## Investigating educational experiences of young black professional footballers in the UK

### **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

A research study is being conducted at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) by Nyall Simms.

#### **Background**

This is a research study to help gain a further understanding of the socio-cultural influences and standard of education received by young black male footballers in the UK.

#### **What will you be required to do?**

Participants in this study will be required to engage in 1-2 semi-structured interviews focusing on their educational experiences within professional football. These will be undertaken 1 on 1 with principle investigator Nyall Simms, either in person or over Skype.

#### **To participate in this research you must:**

- Be a current or ex-professional footballer
- Be of African or Caribbean descent

#### **Procedures**

As this project involves a semi-structured questioning technique, the interview *may* develop in unexpected ways. Consequently, although the Ethics Committee is aware of the general areas to be explored in the interview, the Committee has not been able to review the *precise* questions to be used. In the event that the line of questioning does develop in such a way that you feel hesitant or uncomfortable you are reminded of *your right to decline to answer any particular question(s) and also that you may withdraw from the project at any stage* without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

#### **Feedback**

Interviews will be recorded on a digital Dictaphone. This is important so I can capture your words, ideas, thoughts and emotions and this is the reason for making the recording. I will be making notes during the interview and you have the right to view these notes should you wish. You are welcome to request a copy of the results of the project and any interview transcripts to ensure that the study adequately reports what you had actually felt and expressed at interview. The data collected will be discussed in my MA thesis.



### **Confidentiality**

I am very conscious of the rights of individuals who partake in this study. Names and places will be changed in research reports to protect the identity of the participants. No information obtained during the course of the study will be discussed with anyone else outside the research team without prior written consent from the participants. When writing up the study, identity protection will be provided by using pseudonyms. All data and personal information will be stored securely within CCCU premises in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the University's own data protection requirements. Data can only be accessed by Nyal Simms and supervisors James Brighton and Kristy Howells. The data will be kept up until the final submission of the thesis is handed in. After completion of the study, all data will be deleted and destroyed by Nyal Simms.

### **Dissemination of results**

Results of this project may be published but findings will in no way be linked to any specific participant. You are welcome to request a copy of the results, your interview transcripts and any publications should you wish. The results from the research will be discussed in my dissertation for my MA Research Masters.

### **Deciding whether to participate**

If you have any questions or concerns about the nature, procedures or requirements for participation do not hesitate to contact me. Should you decide to participate, you will be free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason.

### **Any questions?**

Please contact Nyal Simms on 01227767700 [n.c.simms295@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:n.c.simms295@canterbury.ac.uk). Alternatively James Brighton via email on [james.brighton@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:james.brighton@canterbury.ac.uk)

### **Example Interview Questions**

*Here are an example of the types of questions that will be asked in the interview with the participant:*

Did/do you feel as though your coaches cared about your future?

Did/do you feel as if your race limits you?

Did/do you feel as if your race ever played to your advantage.

Did/do you feel as if you could talk to your coaches outside of footballing reasons?

What pressures to perform well did/do you face with regards to your academic performance?.

What other career paths did/do you look towards?

What influenced you to play football?

Why do you believe you are good at football?

Did/do you have any injuries from football, if yes how did it affect your life?

*Ethics Rev Checklist ver 11\_Aug 17*

## 9.4 Consent form



# CONSENT FORM

**Title of Project:** Investigating educational experiences of young black professional footballers in the UK

**Name of Researcher:** NYALL SIMMS

**Contact details:**

Address:	North Holmes Road Canterbury Kent CT1 1QU
Tel:	01227 923102
Email:	n.c.simms295@canterbury.ac.uk

**Please initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I understand that any personal information that I provide to the researchers will be kept strictly confidential
4. I agree to allow my interviews to be audio recorded.
5. I agree to take part in the above study


_____ Name of Participant	_____ Date	_____ Signature
_____ Name of Person taking consent (if different from researcher)	_____ Date	_____ Signature
_____ Nyall Simms	_____ Date	_____ Signature

Copies: 1 for participant  
1 for researcher

## 9.5 Ethics form



For Research Office Use

Checklist No:

Date Received:

### PROPORTIONATE ETHICAL REVIEW

### ETHICS REVIEW CHECKLIST

Sections A and B of this checklist must be completed for every research or knowledge transfer project that involves human or animal<sup>1</sup> participants. These sections serve as a toolkit that will identify whether a full application for ethics approval needs to be submitted.

If the toolkit shows that there is **no need for a full ethical review**, Sections D, E and F should be completed and the checklist emailed to [red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk) as described in Section C.

If the toolkit shows that **a full application is required**, this checklist should be set aside and an *Application for Faculty Research Ethics Committee Approval Form* - or an appropriate external application form - should be completed and submitted. **There is no need to complete both documents.**

**Before completing this checklist, please refer to Ethics Policy for Research Involving Human Participants and the Code of Practice for the Use of Sentient Animals in Research and Teaching on the University Research website.**

The principal researcher/project leader (or, where the principal researcher/project leader is a student, their supervisor) is responsible for exercising appropriate professional judgement in this review.

**N.B. This checklist must be completed – and any resulting follow-up action taken - before potential participants are approached to take part in any study.**

Type of Project - please mark (x) as appropriate			
Research	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Knowledge Exchange	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Section A: Applicant Details

A1. Name of applicant:	Nyall Simms
A2. Status (please underline):	Postgraduate Student
A3. Email address:	n.c.simms295@canterbury.ac.uk
A4. Contact address:	31 Mayfield Crescent, Thornton Heath, London, CR7 6DH
A5. Telephone number	07904211464

<sup>1</sup> Sentient animals, generally all vertebrates and certain invertebrates such as cephalopods and crustaceans

<sup>2</sup> Checklists for Undergraduates should be retained within the academic department concerned